The image shows the front cover of a book. The cover is decorated with a traditional marbled paper pattern, featuring large, irregular, organic shapes in shades of brown, tan, and cream, separated by dark, swirling veins. A vertical strip of plain tan material forms the spine on the left side. A small, rectangular white label is affixed to the spine, displaying the number '2112.9'. At the bottom of the spine, there is a red rectangular label with the words 'Research Library' in white, sans-serif font.

2112.9

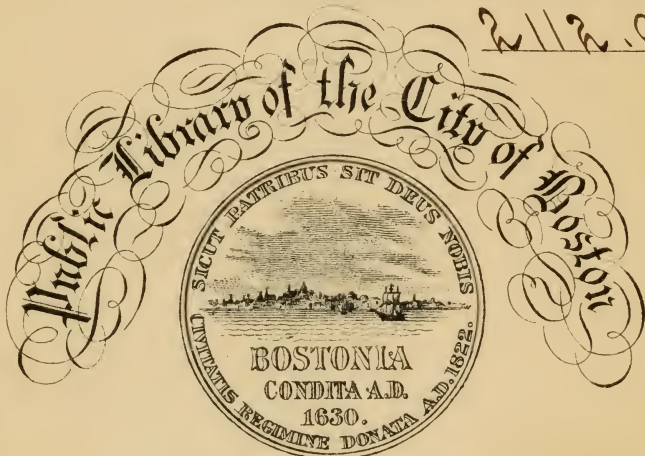
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CHEAP BOOKS,

AND

HOW TO GET THEM.

BEING

A REPRINT, FROM THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW FOR APRIL, 1852,  
OF THE ARTICLE ON

“THE COMMERCE OF LITERATURE.”

BY

JOHN CHAPMAN.

LONDON:

JOHN CHAPMAN, 142, STRAND.

M.DCCC.LII.

LONDON

GEORGE WOODFALL AND SON,  
ANGEL COURT, SKINNER STREET.

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May 13-56

## PREFACE.

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THREE months ago an Association of London Booksellers and Publishers attempted to restrain me from selling books as cheaply as I had determined to do. I adhered to the scale of reduced prices which I had adopted. The book merchants and publishers closed their accounts with me, and refused to supply me with books, even for cash, threatening at the same time to impose the like penalty upon any member of the trade who should not assist in enforcing the punishment, in order, either to ruin me, or to compel me to conduct my business according to their prescribed formula, which, in effect, would have been to raise again my prices, in many instances, to almost a prohibitory standard.

Convinced of my right to dispose of my own property as I pleased, and believing that the public would support me if I made known my position, I published the following Article, in the latter part of which the proceedings and results of the Association are exposed. My appeal to public opinion has met with a response even more cordial and emphatic than I counted upon, and one which is in some degree a compensation for the injury inflicted upon me in the meantime by the upholders of the existing system. The decided and general interest which has been manifested in the controversy, has induced me to reprint the Article for separate circulation.



The editor of *The Times*, concurring in the views embodied in the following pages, imparted to them, by his all efficient aid, a significancy and power which the opponents of unfettered literary commerce are unable to resist. Also to the *Leader*, *Economist*, *Inquirer*, *Examiner*, and *Nonconformist*, honour is due, for the independent spirit they have displayed in reference to the question at issue; but it is humiliating to observe the subserviency of a large portion of the public journals to the publishers, for the sake of their advertising patronage. Newspapers advocating a duty on corn may consistently defend the cause of the protectionists of literature; but that those which are notoriously committed to the principles of free trade should—in conjunction with a periodical devoted exclusively to scientific and literary objects—lend their aid to perpetuate restrictive laws in the republic of letters, affords a melancholy illustration of the morals of the press.

Though the subject treated in the last section of the Article may now claim the chief notice of the reader, yet I trust that when the passing storm, which is imparting to it an exclusive interest, shall have blown over, the fiscal obstacles to cheap literature will attract that public attention which their importance deserves, and which, when fairly fixed upon them, will ensure their destruction.

142, STRAND, April 22, 1852.



# THE COMMERCE OF LITERATURE\*.

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THE facts connected with the production and distribution of books, though little heeded by the public, are, nevertheless, of great social and political, as well as literary, importance. Wherever our empire extends, Englishmen are wont to point with pride to the freedom and power of the press, but neither

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\* The following books and documents were referred to during the preparation of this article :—

1. The Struggles of a Book against Excessive Taxation. By Charles Knight. London. 1850.

2. A Letter addressed to the Right Hon. Lord John Russell, showing the evil Effects and Injustice of the Excise Laws, and the Loss to the Community by such a Mode of Raising Revenue. By James Baldwin. Sherburne Paper Mill, Birmingham. 1848.

3. A Letter to Lord John Russell from a Paper Maker. Edinburgh. 1850.

4. Chambers's Edinburgh Journal. Jan. 11, 1851. Art., State Burdens on Literature.

5. Reports of the Association for the Abolition of the Taxes on Knowledge.

6. Report from the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps; together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, and Index. 1851.

7. The Question of unreciprocated Foreign Copyright in Great Britain. A Report of the Speeches and Proceedings at a Public Meeting held at the Hanover Square Rooms, July 1, 1851.

8. Booksellers' Monopoly. Address to the Trade and to the Public. By William Pickering. 1832.

9. Cases showing the arbitrary and oppressive Conduct of the Committee of Booksellers. London: Pickering. 1832.

10. On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures. By Charles Babbage, Esq., A.M. Fourth Edition. London: John Murray. 1846.

11. The Case of the Authors, as regards the Paper Duty. By Charles Knight. Second Edition. London. 1851.

12. Is the Glasgow Booksellers' Protection Association a lawful Association, or is it an illegal Conspiracy? Glasgow. 1843.

13. Trade Regulations and Declaration of the Booksellers' Association. London. 1850.

the one nor the other is such as to warrant our self-gratulation, if we consider what it might be, or even what exists beyond the Atlantic. We believe that the informing and elevating power which the printing-press and steam-engine have already placed at our command is insignificant compared with that which these mighty agencies will confer, when the obstacles that now impede their full development shall have been removed. In the hope of hastening their removal, we shall endeavour in this article to exhibit all the direct and collateral causes, of a fiscal and commercial character, inimical to the progress and diffusion of literature in the British Isles.

The chief material of books is of course the paper on which they are printed. The cost of "setting up" the type, or the "composition," as it is called, and of printing-off the impressions of a work, forms a large proportion of the whole expense of production, when the edition is a small one; but when works are printed in "long numbers,"—say 20,000 or 50,000 copies,—the cost of "composition" being spread over the whole edition, is much less important even than that of press-work, or "machining,"—that is, printing by steam,—and both these items become altogether subordinate to the outlay on paper. Thus the first obstacle to cheap literature is the high price of paper. In the tenth year of the reign of Queen Anne, the Government imposed a Duty on Paper, alleging that "it was necessary to raise large sums of money to carry on the war." War has long ceased, but the tax remains—reduced, however, since 1837, to one-half its former amount. The Chancellor of the Exchequer now receives 14*l.* 14*s.* for every ton of paper manufactured, which is a little more than 1½*d.* on every pound, or a fifth of the selling price of most papers used for printing. The duty received by the Government upon all kinds of papers, in 1850, was 852,996*l.* 13*s.* 10*d.* As the price of books or newspapers is diminished, the proportionate amount of duty paid upon them increases; thus, if a book weighing a pound be sold for 10*s.*, it pays a duty of 1¼ per cent., whereas, were it sold for 2*s.* 6*d.*, it would have to pay 5 per cent. to the Government.

But the evil of this governmental oppression is not measured simply by the duty imposed. Like a poison in the system, it extends its morbid influence in every direction, stifling both enterprise and competition in the manufacture and sale of paper, and thus raising the price still farther beyond the normal standard. It is notorious that articles, subject at each stage of their manufacture to the detailed supervision and control of the Excise, make slow progress both in reference to improvement of quality and diminution of price; and of this rule paper is a striking example. In the words of a Scotch manufacturer:—



“The mode of charging the duty, the surveillance of the excise officers, the delays in sending goods to market caused by these rules and regulations, the weighing, labelling, numbering, reweighing, &c., &c., besides heavy penalties which may very inadvertently be incurred, form altogether a most burdensome and oppressive yoke, adding very materially to the labour and expense of carrying on the business.”

Mr. Baldwin says:—

“It costs me in labour alone, to help to charge myself with the duty on paper, above 100*l.* a year. I make about twelve tons per week; and in consequence of these Excise Laws have to weigh every ream four times over, besides taking the number of every ream, and writing the weight on each.”

Moreover, the large cash disbursements which the duty necessitates exclude moderate capitalists, so that almost none but those commanding very extensive resources venture upon either the manufacturing or distributing branches of the trade, whose members therefore enjoy a certain monopoly, which, in conjunction with the operation of the *Excise laws*, results in an addition to the legitimate price of an amount equal to two-thirds of the tax itself. Mr. Charles Knight in his interesting pamphlet, *The Struggles of a Book*, makes the addition still higher. He says—

“Mr. MacCulloch and Mr. Porter rightly state that the price for a ream of one particular sort of printing paper was, in 1831, 1*l.* 4*s.*; in 1843, 15*s.* 6*d.* From 1833 to 1837, the price of a ream of Penny Cyclopædia paper was 1*l.* 13*s.*; from 1838 to 1846, it was 1*l.* 4*s.* The difference in price was 9*s.* per ream; the amount of reduced duty was 4*s.* 4½*d.* The paper-makers and the stationers doubled the tax.”

At a meeting of manufacturers in Edinburgh about a year ago, it was asserted that the duty of 1½*d.* obstructed the manufacture to an extent which raised the price about an additional ½*d.*, so that in their opinion, they could produce paper at 2*d.* per lb. less than they now do, if the duty were abolished. But the mass of paper, whether necessarily so or not, is supplied to the publishers by means of paper-merchants, or stationers, who reap a profit on the immense sums which they vest in the duty alone; now if before the paper leaves the hands of the maker ½*d.* be added to the price by the operation of the tax, it is fair to presume that when it gets into the stationer's warehouse, the same influence will still be exerted, so that we shall be justified in affirming that the total result of the tax, directly and indirectly, is an increase of cost to the consumer of at least 2½*d.* per lb., which is equal to a little more than 2 per cent. on the rich man's volume, weighing 1 lb. and selling for 10*s.*, and to a little more than 8 per cent. on the poor man's volume of the same weight, for which he pays 2*s.* 6*d.*



This view of the practical operation of the tax forcibly illustrates its extreme oppressiveness in relation to the poorer classes, who have not pounds nor even shillings, but only pence wherewithal to procure mental food. Publishers like Mr. Murray, and the readers of his costly books, are scarcely conscious of the restriction by which they are apparently unaffected; while it presses so injuriously upon the people as to forbid them that instruction which would otherwise be within their reach, and which enterprising men, whose efforts are now virtually paralyzed, would be eager to furnish in abundance, at a price commensurate with humble means. But the evil does not stop here; its pernicious vitality shows itself again in the unsaleable part of the publisher's accumulating stock. If he is to live by his business, it is clear that the money vested in unsaleable stock must be charged upon that which is saleable, the cost of which is thus increased to the consumer; and as a portion of the money sunk consists of the duty and the augment it occasions, the increased price of the saleable books is, in great measure, due to this multiplying cause. Another effect directly attributable to the same source, is the fear commonly felt by publishers, of printing large editions of their publications, lest, in the event of non-success, the cost of the paper employed, augmented so greatly as we have shown it to be by the tax, should entail losses too heavy for them to bear. In proportion as the edition of a work is small, does the price of each copy increase; hence in proportion as the tax heightens the cost of paper, and thereby the disinclination of the publishers to print large numbers, precisely in that proportion does it directly heighten the price of books to the public. The results of the duty, as experienced by Mr. Charles Knight, and by Messrs. W. and R. Chambers, are the best illustration that can be given of the truth and importance of what we have stated. Mr. Knight asserts that—"the total payment to the Excise by the 'Penny Cyclopædia' has been 16,500*l*." and he clearly shows that this excessive burden upon the great work to which he has devoted seventeen years of toil and anxiety, has been the primary cause that the enterprise has not yet been remunerative.

But the 16,500*l*. actually paid by Mr. Knight to the Excise, will, as we have shown, only represent three-fifths of the increased price of the paper used by him for his great work. As we have already intimated, he views the proportion as still less, and points out that the additions made by the paper-makers and the stationers to the amount of the duty on the raw material, together with the accumulating interest on the duty actually paid upon dead stock, swelled up the sum originally exacted by the Excise to *thirty-two thousand pounds*.

He further says:—

“Upon a tolerably accurate calculation I have, from my own unaided resources, expended, during the last twenty years, *eighty thousand pounds upon Copyright* and Editorial Labour. During the same period I have paid *fifty thousand pounds Paper Duty*, which sum has become a double charge to me by the inevitable operation of a tax upon raw material.”

Mr. Knight may well ask, as he does, what, during these twenty years, the Government has done for the encouragement of learning and literature, equivalent to the sum which it has exacted from him in the shape of a tax upon knowledge? The *Miscellany of Tracts* of Messrs. Chambers was given up when it had a circulation of 80,000 copies. “Now, this little work, at the time of its conclusion, had paid upwards of 5000*l.* of paper duty. Had that sum remained with the publishers, the profit would have been more than sufficient to induce them to go on with the publication.”\* Such are the effects of indirect taxation!

We have not space to enter into the question—to what extent does the paper duty affect the circulation of newspapers in Great Britain? but from what has already been said, its great restrictive power will be readily inferred. The newspaper stamp and the ignorance of the masses, are, doubtless, additional obstacles to the circulation of newspapers, but the paper duty has an important share in determining the relative activity of our newspaper press and that of America. There are fifteen daily papers published in New York, the average aggregate issue of which is 130,000 copies. Two-fifths of these are circulated in the country, leaving three-fifths for the town, which is at the rate of rather more than one copy for every *ten* inhabitants of New York. There are ten daily papers published in London, the average aggregate issue of which is about 65,000. Only one-third of these is supposed to be retained for circulation in the metropolis, being in the proportion of rather less than one for every *hundred* inhabitants.

The second formidable barrier to the extensive circulation of books is the Duty on Advertisements. In the year 1850 the Government drew from this source 163,038*l.* 1*s.* It is difficult to form an accurate idea as to what proportion of this is borne by literature: a conjecture in “Chambers’s Journal” fixes the probable amount at 12,000*l.* a year, which, in our opinion, is much below the truth. In 1830, the tax on adver-

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\* “Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal.”



tisements, when 3s. 6d. was levied on each, realized 173,821*l.*, of which a full third was supposed, by a writer in the "Edinburgh Review," to have been derived from publishers' announcements. It is of less importance, however, to estimate the amount of this tax, than to show how it operates on the publication of books.

The system of publishing in England, involves a larger expenditure for advertising than is incurred in any other country; because here publishers depend more exclusively than elsewhere upon advertisements for making their works known to the public. The most extensive and systematic organization for publishing exists in Germany. There are several centres of activity. Berlin in the north, Nuremberg, Frankfort, Stuttgardt, Vienna, and other towns in the south, have their numerous agents, who reciprocally forward the new works as they are issued, and still further distribute them to the booksellers within the spheres of their respective connections. But the chief emporium of the German bookselling world is Leipsic, where there is a Booksellers' Exchange (*Deutsche Buchhandler Börse*), the condition of admission to which is, that the applicant shall pay a certain entrance fee and annual subscription, show proof that he is established as a bookseller, and give a written assurance that he will adhere to and uphold the laws of the association, and, in case of dispute, will submit to arbitrators appointed by the committee of management. All the publishers in Germany, we believe, send a supply of their new publications to their agents at Leipsic, who again dispense them to the booksellers throughout Germany, "*à condition*," that is, with the privilege of returning them at the end of the half-year, if not sold, thus enabling the frequenters of all the respectable booksellers' shops to see the new works, and to form an opinion of their merits. It is obvious that good books have a better chance of being sold when seen, than when merely advertised as on sale.

No such organization exists in France, but we believe that some publishers have adopted a portion of the system. The principal partner of one of the greatest publishing firms in Paris informed us, that it is the practice of his house to send to every bookseller in the provinces with whom it may have an account, a single copy of each new work, when issued, with the privilege of returning it, if unsold. In America the same plan is partially practised, but the publishers there also advertise extensively, besides which, they often barter their works with each other. In England various publishers have from time to time made the experiment of sending their works into the country on sale or return; it has not, however, been



attended with any satisfactory results. One great objection alleged against the system is, the injury the unsold books sustain from their transit to and fro, and their long exposure in the country shops; but whatever may be the causes preventing the adoption of this system, the fact remains, that almost the only way in which readers become aware of the existence of new English books is by means of advertisements.

The chiefs of the trade are divided in opinion, both in respect to the extent to which it is desirable to advertise any given book, and to the relative values of the various media to be employed. Omitting for the moment the consideration of pamphlets, and books sold at a very low price, we shall not be far from the truth in stating, that 20*l.* is the minimum, and 150*l.* the maximum *usually* spent in advertising each new book; but there are not unfrequently cases in which the enormous sums of 200*l.* and even 300*l.* are hazarded in these costly experiments. Upon six books, the prices of which in no instance exceeded 1*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.*, we have indisputable evidence that 300*l.*, 200*l.*, 200*l.*, 175*l.*, 150*l.*, and 140*l.* were respectively expended in advertising. One house makes a practice of varying the amounts expended from 70*l.* to 150*l.*; another generally limits itself between 25*l.* and 100*l.*; and a third rarely exceeds 60*l.* But the most startling facts connected with this subject are the amounts *annually* spent in advertising by some of the principal publishers. The expenditure of the firm of Messrs. Colburn and Bentley during three years, viz., 1830, 1831, and 1832, reached to 27,000*l.*, or 9000*l.* a year; and we have authority for stating that at the present time the separate houses of Messrs. Colburn and Co. and Mr. Bentley disburse about 5000*l.* a year each. Another house, we believe, pays upwards of 3000*l.* a year, and it is probable, considering the relative number of works published by Messrs. Longman and Co., that they spend a larger sum than the publishers above mentioned. A knowledge of the extent to which the tax on advertisements affects the production and distribution of books, would be obtained most accurately, by calculating what is the proportion between the sum spent in advertising and the total amount of sales effected by the different London publishers. We have been informed by the principal of one establishment, that, of the total sum realized from the sale of his publications during several years, he spent 21 per cent. in advertisements.

One result of the costliness of advertising is the virtual suppression of pamphlets and low-priced books. The cheap literature which has made its appearance during the last few years will perhaps be pointed to as evidence on the other side; but a moment's reflection on the proportion which it bears to the entire

quantity annually produced by the English press, or even to the cheap *copyright* books issued in America, must induce the conviction of its *comparatively* insignificant amount. The inevitableness of this result will be immediately seen by means of the following illustration. If the printing, the paper, and the binding of 1000 copies of a work, say in three volumes, cost 300*l.*, and if in advertising it 100*l.* be expended, the latter sum would form one-fourth of the whole, or 25 per cent. ; whereas, if the production of a pamphlet, say of two sheets, costs 10*l.*, and if it be advertised to the extent of 10*l.*, a sum equal to half the entire outlay, or 50 per cent., has been thus expended. Nevertheless, in these two cases it will be perceived that the book upon which 25 per cent. of the total cost has been disbursed for advertisements, has had the chance of becoming ten times more widely known than the one upon which 50 per cent. of the total cost has been expended for the same purpose. If the relative cost of making known low and high-priced books bore hard only upon the goodly proportions of the “respectable,” “orthodox” pamphlet of large type and wide margins (where the printers, to use their own phrase, find plenty of “fat”), in which ambitious young authors often make their *début*, we should not murmur so much at the infliction ; but its worst consequences fall on that large class of the English people whose limited income obliges them to forego the enjoyment of intellectual luxuries. Were it not for the obstacle which the cost of advertising, added to the paper duty, presents, a large number of books, now published at an absurdly high price, which restricts them to the drawing-room of the rich, would be issued at prices which would render them purchasable by thousands who now only see them by means of the circulating libraries, and to tens of thousands who can never see them at all. Why are novels, narratives of voyages and travels, and indeed nearly all the most entertaining books—no matter what their natural or actual length—either spread out into the most ludicrous state of attenuation, or remorselessly cut down, as the case may be, in order to fit them for the publisher’s Procrustean bed of three volumes post octavo? Simply because the said publisher knows that books of this class *will* be had at almost any price by the few; and in face of the difficulties he has to encounter from the high price of paper and advertising, he finds it easier and more profitable to sell 500 copies of a work at a guinea and a half per copy, than 5000 at half a crown, or 50,000 at a shilling. Mr. Bentley’s “Library of Standard Novels” was an exceptional experiment in the right direction, but to make it known efficiently he had to spend *three thousand five hundred pounds* !



It is notorious, that a small proportion only of the entire number of new books issued pay their expenses, while the success attendant on the publication of new editions is still less. In hundreds of cases the profit realized from the sale of a first edition is hopelessly sunk in bringing out a new one. A large number of intrinsically valuable works, after having been read by 500 or 1000 persons, now pass into oblivion. It cannot be alleged that the works in question find all the readers they are adapted for, and may therefore well leave the world to the crowd of more welcome competitors. The fact is, that of the thousands they were capable of interesting, those only have read them to whom they were made known, and who at the same time were rich enough to purchase them at their high prices. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is the ever-present though invisible ghost, at whose bidding their circulation is stopped. Were it not for the dread he inspires, how many publishers, holding copyrights of valuable books, the first editions of which are exhausted, would hasten to reprint them at prices rendering them accessible to the mass of the people! At present, the only chance (and it is a small one) of making low-priced books succeed, is by publishing them as parts of a series, whereby they, to some extent, advertise each other, and profit also from the feeling of dislike in the purchaser to have an imperfect set of books.

In the progress of civilization there must always be a number of men possessing an amount of intelligence far superior to the great majority of the people. These men of character, fitly so called, who mark the age in which they live, who are devoted to ideas and are worshippers of truth—in short, the men we describe as “original thinkers”—are necessarily few in number, and are unable completely to impart to the world at large their more extended views and more perfect apprehension of the truths with which they are impressed. They are only fully appreciated and understood by the thoughtful and educated circle immediately beneath them. Hence, if they resort to the printing-press as a means of diffusing their ideas, they are likely to involve themselves in loss. These are the authors from whose books the publisher instinctively shrinks. And yet the world must have them; indeed, if it had the power of discerning their value, all other books would seem insignificant beside them. Who shall compute the worth to mankind of the recorded speculations and discoveries of such men as Galileo, Copernicus, Newton, and Laplace; or, to come to our own day, of such profound investigators as Faraday and Owen? And yet what is the value of their books estimated from the publisher's point of view? If called upon to incur the risk of their publication,



he would prudently decline the adventure. Thus they have to struggle into existence as they may. Should their authors be possessed of means to issue them, well; but if not, they have to bide their time. The same remarks apply to a certain class of works, having a more direct and intimate relation to the educated portion of the community. Books of theology, religious and moral philosophy, and social science, are limited in circulation in proportion as they represent the views of profound thinkers; and consequently their publication is generally attended with a large amount of unremunerated labour, and the capital invested is, in varying proportions, too often lost. Now the "fit" readers of scientific and philosophical books, "though few," have, nevertheless, "a wide geographical distribution," and therefore it is necessary to spend a considerable sum in advertising even these works, the editions of which are very small. Moreover, the demand for them is not rapid and brief, but slow and continuous, and if the increasing number of students to which they are addressed must be kept aware of their existence, an annual expenditure is thus involved, which frequently leaves the balance from their sale of a rather microscopic character, if not on the wrong side of the account.

In determining on the publication of a volume, the paper, printing, and binding of which, we will suppose, cost 75*l.*, the author or publisher has yet to add, as an indispensable element of the calculation, a certain sum for advertisements, say 25*l.*, or 25 per cent. of the total expenditure, which sum may justly be regarded as, to all intents and purposes, a part of the capital invested in the work. The capital itself of a literary man is thus enormously taxed, or rather he is directly robbed of a portion of it, without any question whether his risk of the remainder will be attended with a profit or a loss!

The following statement of the results of publishing four books, the last of which reached a second edition, will show at once what effectual measures the Government has adopted to obstruct the growth and expansion of the higher branches of knowledge.

## No. I. Published Six Years.

	Tax.			Total cost.				Proceeds of sale.
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.		£ s. d.
171 Reams paper (weight, 4575 lbs., at 2½d.)	47	13	1	183	16	6	No. printed, 1000.	
Printing				254	12	9	By 26 copies sold at reduced rate, 13s	16 18 6
Binding 685 copies				67	6	6	628 " 25s. 6d. ....	800 14 0
Editors, 23 copies				29	6	6	346 in stock.	
To National Libraries, 5 copies	6	7	6	6	7	6	1000	817 12 0
Advertising	36	19	9	73	19	9	Less commission, 10 per cent...	81 15 2
Profit..	91	0	4	615	9	6		
				120	7	4		
				735	16	10		735 16 10

## No. II. Published Two Years.

	Tax.			Total cost.				Proceeds of sale.
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.		£ s. d.
102½ Reams paper (weight, 2562 lbs., at 2½d.)	26	13	9	107	12	6	No. printed, 750.	
Printing				240	0	0	By 400 copies sold, at 17s.....	340 0 0
Binding, 400 copies				27	3	8	350 in stock.	
Editors, 17 copies				14	9	0	750	
National Libraries, 5 copies..	4	5	0	4	5	0	Less commission, 10 per cent...	34 0 0
Advertising	30	10	7	61	1	2		306 0 0
	61	9	4	444	11	4	Excess of outlay	138 11 4
								444 11 4

## No. III. Published Six Years.

	Tax.			Total cost.				Proceeds of sale.
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.		£ s. d.
35 Reams paper (weight, 1050 lbs., at 2½d.)	10	18	9	37	12	6	By 1029 copies printed and sol in the course of six years, at 4s. 11d. ....	252 19 3
Printing				53	14	0	Less commission, 10 pe cent...	25 5 11
Binding 1029 copies				21	15	8		
Editors, 15 copies				3	13	9		
National Libraries, 5 copies..	1	4	7	1	4	7		
Advertising	29	7	8	58	15	4		
Profit..	41	11	0	176	15	10		
				50	17	6		
				227	13	4		227 13 4

## No. IV. Published Three Years.

	Tax.			Total cost.				Proceeds of sale.
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.		£ s. d.
23 Reams paper (weight, 690 lbs., at 2½d.)	6	15	5	28	15	0	No. printed, 1000.	
Printing				36	1	0	By 900 copies sold, at 4s. 2d. ....	187 10 0
Binding 900 copies				18	18	0	100 in stock.	
Editors, 4 copies				0	16	8	1000	
National Libraries, 5 copies..	1	0	10	1	0	10	Less commission, 10 per cent...	18 15 0
Advertising	11	14	8	23	9	4		
Profit..	19	10	11	109	0	10		
				59	14	2		
				168	15	0		168 15 0



It will be found that the total aggregate cost of the above four books is 1345*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.*, of which 213*l.* 11*s.* 7*d.* consists of taxes, being at the rate of 16 per cent.

When advertizing to the paper duty we showed that, *practically*, it amounts to 2½*d.* per lb.; it is, therefore, charged as such. We consider the amount paid as advertisement duty in the proportion of 25 per cent. on the total cost, when books are advertised separately—the only way in which they can be effectually advertised in the best medium, the *Times*, for only the first line of each advertisement, no matter how long, is “displayed” in that paper—but when several books are advertised together, and the name of the publisher appears only once, the duty on the whole advertisement, being only 1*s.* 6*d.*, is proportionately much diminished. It would be difficult to determine how much the cost of advertising is enhanced by the tax in question, but the augmentation is enormous. Whatever may be the reduction which its repeal would occasion, one great advantage would consist in the fact, that then the charge for each advertisement, under the influence of free competition, would be in proportion to its cost of production, and would thus, in great measure, be an index of value to the advertiser. If we suppose that of two periodicals one has a circulation of 40,000 and the other of 10,000, and that the readers of both are equally likely to purchase a given book when they see it announced, it is clear that if an advertisement in the one is charged at 6*s.*, in the other it would be worth only 1*s.* 6*d.* But it is impossible now, that the periodical with a circulation of 10,000 should charge its advertisement at its relative value, 1*s.* 6*d.*, because it has to pay the whole of that sum to the Government; it is, therefore, compelled to charge from 100 to 200 per cent. more for its advertisements than their proportionate intrinsic value, and the advertiser must either submit to this injustice or forego the advantage of announcing his goods in all those media whose circulation, though small, is chiefly within peculiar and exclusive sections of the community that cannot be otherwise reached. Hence we regard the direct and indirect effect of the tax in raising the total average cost of advertisements as, at the very least, 50 per cent. We have therefore stated it as such in the accounts given above. Of course, even though the tax were abolished, the widely-circulating journal would still be able to insert advertisements at a proportionately cheaper rate than the journal of small circulation, because the cost of composition in the one case is spread over a large number of copies, while in the other it is borne by a small one; and thus, if the shackles were re-



moved, success would be on the side of the strong still more emphatically than before.

Though the removal of the tax would be an immense advantage to literature, advertisements would still form a terrible item in the cost of the great majority of books, and in the same *disproportionate* oppressiveness that exists now on the low-priced volumes compared with those more costly. The causes necessitating this outlay are, first, the great number of advertising media, the best of which have a very limited circulation compared with the extent of the reading public, so that it is incumbent on the publisher to make known his publications in each medium, if he would reach each class; and, secondly, the fact that the millions have no literary appetite. Hence it is that they need to be *tempted* by every device that ingenuity can suggest. Evil always engenders evil; and for the present we fear these conditions must inevitably entail a continuance of the system we deplore. Were the people generally educated, they would be on the alert for every new product of the press, so that a vast economy might immediately be effected in the item of advertising. For then one medium, rendered accessible to all, would suffice. If the publishers were to issue a weekly periodical, containing classified advertisements of all the works published in Britain during the successive intervals, each contributing towards the cost in proportion to the space his advertisement might occupy, to which should be added an accurate and comprehensive report, classified with equal care, of all works published abroad, a million copies (or several millions, if found needful) could be distributed, gratis, throughout the country to every literary institution, reading room, book society, and private individual that would apply for it, at a small expense compared with the enormous aggregate sum now annually lavished on the same object. The result would obviously be a great advantage to authors, publishers, and the public. By the concentration of literary advertisements into one medium, a large number of second and third rate periodicals now mainly dependent upon them would fall to the ground, and thus a barrier to sound instruction, in the form of the superficial and profitless reading they too often supply, would give way to books of a truly informing and elevating kind. An instalment of the plan we have suggested is, perhaps, practicable; but it would be vain to hope for more, both for the reasons already adduced, and because the adoption of such a system would demand the presence of culture, mutual respect, and forbearance—which can alone make any effective co-operation possible—to an extent, not yet, we fear, to be found even in the republic of letters.

The actual results from the publication of four books, as given

in a preceding page, exhibit in the column of taxes one item still unnoticed, viz., the five copies presented by compulsion to certain public libraries. Eleven copies of every book issued were formerly claimed, but by the exertions of Mr. J. S. Buckingham, the number is now reduced to five. On what principles this remnant of robbery was retained, it is not easy to discern. If the Government, in making the demand, were impelled only by paternal yearnings for a remembrancer of all its children's achievements, it surely ought to ask for contributions from each. A sample of every new device AND IMPROVEMENT (for publishers have to give copies of each *improved* edition) constituting the multifarious manufactures of England, not omitting each work of art (for publishers contribute five copies of every *illustrated* book they produce), would form a rather extensive and interesting collection. The question where to keep it might afford immediate relief to the gentlemen now painfully perplexed concerning the fate of the Crystal Palace. Think of an *English* Exhibition to rival the Cosmopolitan one of last year! The very idea may silence the book-maker's murmurings for a time, but should he see no chance of its realization, we fear that even the distinguished honour now conferred upon him will not restrain him from constantly petitioning to be excused from these forced "benevolences." So long, however, as they continue to be levied, the tyranny of *compelling* the publisher *himself* to *deliver* the copies demanded might at least be dispensed with. Surely it would not be too much to ask that the collector should call for the amount of the assessment, as in other cases of direct taxation. The unfortunate publisher who may by sheer inadvertence neglect to deliver the copies claimed, ignorant of being an offender, is summoned, without previous notice, at the behest of Mr. Panizzi, keeper of the printed books in the Museum, and mulcted of several pounds, as an example, it is alleged, to be held *in terrorem* over publishers in general\*.

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\* Two cases of this kind have occurred since the completion of our article, one of them presenting circumstances of peculiar hardship. "Mr. George Sowerby, the well-known conchologist, was summoned (March 18) to the felon's bar at Bow Street, by Mr. Panizzi, . . . . for having neglected to send copies of his 'Thesaurus Conchyliorum' for the use of the national library, agreeable with the terms of the Act of Parliament. Mr. Sowerby pleaded in vain that he had delivered the work regularly up to No. 9, and that the tenth number had only been neglected in consequence of a fire that had occurred in his house, and by which calamity he was a sufferer. The magistrate consulted the Act of Parliament, and mulcted him in a heavy fine and costs. No wonder Mr. Panizzi has been so many years getting over letter A in the new catalogue, when he has to resort to such oppressive measures to get the books in."—*Literary Gazette*, March 20.



Under all circumstances, and in every form, literature is treated as one of the most legitimate subjects of taxation. Not only does the Government tax the material of books and the means of making them known, but, apparently desirous of maintaining our literary as well as our geographical insulation, it opposes, in the shape of a duty on foreign books, a formidable barrier to their importation. The amount thus collected in 1850 was 7670*l.*; a sum utterly insignificant as a contribution to the revenue, but a serious obstacle to an international diffusion of knowledge. Germany, France, and America are the chief sources of the foreign books brought to England. The duty varies: on books published in those countries with which an international copyright law has been established, it is slight; on books published in countries between which and ourselves no such law exists, it is 52*s.* 6*d.* per cwt., or about 6*d.* per lb. The remarks already made on the paper duty apply with double force to this heavy imposition. We shall here speak of it, therefore, only in reference to other still more important facts involved in our literary relations with America. Of all the causes capable of diminishing the price of books in England, we believe none would be so potent as that of an Anglo-American law of international copyright. Lord Campbell's recent decision—granting to American authors a copyright in England, before English authors have a corresponding right accorded to them in America—will doubtless defer, for a long period, the concession of this much needed boon. But in the meantime a step in the right direction might be taken by the reciprocal abolition of the import duties on English and American publications. Great benefits would arise from this step only. The books of American authors, beautifully printed, would be sent over in much larger numbers, and sold at a much cheaper rate than now, while English publishers, no longer terrified by a 10 per cent. duty, *ad valorem*, on the other side, would venture to send editions of their works to the American market, at such an advance on the cost of production as would enable them to compete successfully with the American reprints. They would be favoured in this enterprise by the decided preference of American readers for English printed books. Were the market of the English publishers thus extended, they would necessarily print larger editions of their works, and would be enabled to make a proportionate reduction in price to the English reader. America, then, finding she could, on such advantageous terms, be supplied honestly with what she now unblushingly steals, would undoubtedly encourage a system which would continue to provide her with a cheap literature superior to her own reproductions, both in paper and print, and which,



at the same time, would give her sense of justice—in relation to her great benefactors, the literary men of England—some chance of growth. Such a system once adopted, and the benefit experienced and recognised, as we are assured it would be, the clamour in the United States against an international copyright law would soon be silenced, and whenever that law shall be established, English publishers, instead of thousands, will print tens of thousands of their publications, to be diffused on both sides of the Atlantic. Such a result would give an impulse to education in this country, greater than can be derived from all other sources put together. A literature so cheap as ours would then be, would supersede our wretched sectarian contests about national education, by becoming an engine of instruction, that not even Lord Derby's panacea for ignorance—"the parochial clergy," nor the Government itself could withstand.

But the duty of 10 per cent. on *the English trade price*\* of English books, levied when they reach the American ports, is not the whole difficulty they have now to contend with. There is one dark fact connected with this subject, which will seem incredible to Englishmen, and the statement of which even grates unpleasantly on American ears. We refer to the especial encouragement and protection of literary piracy which the American Government avowedly affords! In the tariff "approved by Congress, July 30, 1846," and which is now in force, will be found, under the head of "Books," the following:—"Books, printed magazines, pamphlets, periodicals, and illustrated newspapers, bound or unbound, not otherwise provided for, 10 per cent.;" but, "Books, periodicals, and other works IN THE COURSE OF PRINTING AND REPUBLICATION IN THE UNITED STATES, 20 PER CENT.!" Or, in other words, the American Government virtually says to its citizen-booksellers and publishers—"We will only impose 10 per cent. duty upon such English books as you will not venture to reprint, but upon the English editions of all those, the copyrights of which you can successfully appropriate, we will impose a duty of 20 per cent., in order to encourage and protect you in your patriotic enterprises. English proprietors will then be utterly unable to compete with you in the sale of their own works." The anxiety of the American Government to make its subjects at least a "knowing" people, stands out in remarkable contrast with the

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\* This was clearly not intended by the framers of the tariff, unless—as we cannot suppose—they wish to exclude English books altogether; for many English publishers would be glad to sell their books *retail* in America at a *lower* price than that at which they are sold to the *trade* in England.

indifference and apathy concerning education which our own rulers display.

We are enabled to close this part of our subject by the recital of two cases, which will well illustrate some of the smaller evils arising out of our anomalous literary relations with America. An American diplomatist, Mr. Wheaton, published, many years ago, a work on "International Law." On the assumption that by publishing in England first, he could secure a copyright here, he transferred to a London publisher the right to publish it in this country. Some years later Mr. Wheaton rewrote the book, and published his improved edition in America. When it appeared (1848) two copies were sent from New York to a bookseller in London, *without his order*. *He, utterly ignorant that the work had been published in England before*, announced it for sale. By order of the English publisher, his solicitors bought one of the copies of the work; immediately afterwards, without the slightest caution or intimation of their intention, they caused the unhappy recipient of the two copies to be summoned to the Court of Chancery, for having infringed the English publisher's copyright. The offender at once called upon him, explained how unintentionally he had acted—how only two copies had come to England, but one of which had been sold—and begged him to stop the proceedings. He answered, in anger, "I can have nothing to say to you, Sir, I consider my property has been injured; I must refer you to my lawyers." After several communications between the delinquent's solicitor and these astute gentlemen, they finally consented to stay proceedings on condition that he would deliver up to them the other copy of the work, and pay their modest bill, which, for simply applying for an "Injunction," amounted to 42*l.* 18*s.* 6*d.* The bill, which was duly paid, included 1*l.* 1*s.* for a clerk's attendance to receive the money. Probably the secret and real cause of the vexation experienced by the London publisher was, that the English public should have been informed that an edition of the work in question, vastly superior to the one lying in his warehouse, now exists; and, we presume, his trade instincts were far too acute to mislead him. He would rightly augur that the knowledge of Mr. Wheaton's rewritten book would effectually prevent him from resuscitating his dead stock on any terms. But his despair, it seems, only determined him the more resolutely, that the results of Mr. Wheaton's increased knowledge and prolonged studies should never become accessible to the English public.

The second case has reference to the mutilation and transformation of English books in America, which is as notorious as it is vexatious to English authors. Haydn's "Dictionary of



Dates," and Latham's "English Language," are good examples, but we will dwell only on the former work, as the circumstances connected with the latter are explained in a letter below. This work is deprived of its unpretending name: its beginning and end are obliterated by preliminary and supplemental matter, either selected or from an American pen, and the book is then rebaptized, "The World's Progress," &c., &c. Haydn's name, though mentioned in the Preface, is exchanged for that of the American editor, in the title page. An importer, expecting an important original work, ordered, during 1851, eleven copies. When making a catalogue last Christmas, he discovered the nature of the book, and immediately erased it from the catalogue, and withdrew it from sale. The publisher of Haydn's "Dictionary of Dates" called on the importer in the beginning of February, and not finding him at home, stated to the clerk in attendance that the "World's Progress" was mainly a reprint of his book: having recently been in friendly communication with the publisher, and therefore anticipating no hostile measures, the importer returned the call, after the lapse of, he believes, two days, but found him not at home. On the 7th of the same month, without any previous notice, the publisher's brother personally served the importer with a summons to answer, in the Court of Chancery, for having sold copies of the "World's Progress." \* The importer explained to him the circumstances as detailed above, expressed his regret for the inadvertent error, offered to pay any legal expenses already incurred, and to remunerate the publisher for the supposed loss arising from the sale of the books in question, but begged him not to increase the expense by carrying the affair into court. On this point the prudent lawyer would not commit himself. The importer immediately applied to the publisher himself in the same terms, but with no better result. The needless injunction was moved for and granted. The importer then renewed the offer he had previously made, and further proceedings were generously put an end to on his payment of 46*l.* 3*s.* 10*d.* Thus our boasted English law is ready at any moment to lend itself to selfish vindictive men as an instrument of rapacious oppression, against which its innocent victims have no protection and no redress. The motive for using it in the first case was clearly vindictiveness, and, we presume in the second, the desire to secure for two brothers—the

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\* We are informed that, contrary to a general order, an apprentice in the importer's employ (ignorant that the work contained copyright matter), sold one of the eleven copies imported, in the month of February. This one was doubtless bought for the lawyer.

one a barrister and the other a solicitor—a little professional employment.

Should the American “annexation” of English books be persisted in, and should English publishers, in such cases, imitate the example of the gentlemen above alluded to, readers in this country will have to dispense with all books published in the United States, as their importation must cease for lack of men bold enough to venture on such a dangerous traffic. But we are happy to state that English publishers are not generally so barbarous as to forget the rules of courtesy on these occasions. Mr. Bohn and Messrs. Longman and Co. frequently act upon them. The following notes present an honourable contrast to the proceedings we have described:—

“39, Paternoster Row, Feb. 19, 1852.

“Messrs. Longman and Co. present their compliments to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and beg to caution him against selling any copies of ‘Putnam’s Home Cyclopedia,’ ‘Hand Book of Universal Biography, by Parke Goodwin,’ and ‘The Hand Book of Literature and the Fine Arts,’ by George Ripley and Bayard Taylor, both published by George P. Putnam, in New York, as they contain copyright matter, the property of Messrs. Longman and Co.”

“Upper Gower Street, March 11, 1852.

“Sir,—Perceiving that you are advertising Mr. Fowler’s work on the English Language, we beg to inform you that we cannot allow it to be sold in this country. Mr. Fowler has made a most improper use of Dr. Latham’s work, having printed entire pages together verbatim, without acknowledgment. We request, therefore, that you will discontinue the sale of the work in this country, otherwise we shall be obliged to apply for an injunction, which it would be more agreeable to our feelings not to do. We will show you a copy of Mr. Fowler’s work, with some of the portions taken from Latham marked in it, if you would like to see it, and will favour us with a call.

“We are, Sir, your obedient Servants,

“TAYLOR, WALTON, AND MABERLY.”

We must now ask our reader’s attention to the system adopted by English publishers for the distribution of their books to the public. It will strike him as somewhat singular that “protection,” after having been driven from the chief branches of our commerce, and all but abandoned by its most pertinacious advocates, should be found lingering in the commerce of literature. Books are still the victims of a policy which they helped so powerfully to destroy.

It has, we believe, always been the practice of publishers, unlike the manufacturers of nearly all other articles of com-



merce, to fix and advertise the price at which their publications should be sold. There are urgent reasons why this exceptional system should be continued in respect to books, because, unless the public be made aware of the price of each work advertised, purchasers would constantly be liable to such surprise and vexation, consequent on its proving greater than anticipated, that they would hesitate to give orders involving them in responsibilities the extent of which they could not foresee. Persons may readily conjecture the probable difference in price between calico and linen, linen and worsted, worsted and silk, or silk and velvet; but the titles of two books, selling respectively at 5s. and 5*l.*, do not necessarily contain any indications of their relative values. These considerations, we presume, originated the plan of advertising the price of each publication. This being determined upon, another question immediately followed, viz.: how shall the agent for the distribution of books be remunerated for his risk and labour? Two modes would naturally occur: either he might charge a commission to his customer on the advertised price, or he might supply him without commission, and depend for his profit on a discount to be obtained from the publisher. The latter mode was the one adopted, and has been the parent of innumerable conflicts and trouble—not yet ended—in the bookselling world. The nominal discount allowed to the trade, *i. e.*, by the publisher to the bookseller, is 25 per cent.; moreover 25 copies are charged as 24, and in cases of low-priced books 13 as 12, or 7 as 6½. But this is not all. The great publishers have annual or semi-annual sales, generally held at the Albion Hotel, with the accompaniments of dinners and wine, in which they are imitated by smaller houses joining together for the same purpose. Catalogues printed in folio are issued to the “select booksellers of London and Westminster,” who are at the same time invited to dinner; and none attend the sale but those who receive an invitation. Provincial booksellers are rigorously excluded. On these occasions the “remainders” or unsold copies of publications which have ceased “to sell” at their original prices, are offered on reduced terms, or sold by auction, while new works, often even before they are issued, are offered at 10 and 15 per cent. below the trade price, with the advantage of long credit, extending, in cases of large purchases, to sixteen months, and sometimes more. Thus the speculations of the publisher are shared by the “select booksellers,” to whom he offers such tempting terms. These sales are remarkable for the extent of business transacted. We have been informed that at one of them, not long ago, Mr. Murray sold books to the amount of

19,000*l.* They gave rise to the term "sale price," which is equivalent to about 30 per cent. discount, and at which publishers will generally sell their books when taken even in small numbers.

No great discrimination is needed to foresee that, with these enormous discounts, varying from 25 to 40 per cent., besides the 25th or 13th book, booksellers have ample margin for profit, and that men possessing superior facilities, whether in the form of capital, skill, capacity for labour, or advantageous position for the transaction of business, will be tempted to offer a portion of this discount to private purchasers, in order to increase their connections and the amount of their "returns." This is what enterprising booksellers would do if they dare; but to dare, in this case, is to fly in the face of a formidable phalanx of monopolists. Indolent tradesmen of the "old school" wish to shackle the men of enterprise so as to prevent them from offering books at lower prices than those at which they can afford to sell them. Publishers who wish to add to their vocation that of retail bookseller, would fain preclude any one from vending their publications at less than the "respectable" terms on which they like to offer them in their own shops; and lastly, the book merchants of Paternoster Row have the strongest inducements of all to extinguish competition. Purchasing largely, as they do, of all the publishers, and therefore at the most advantageous prices, they not only supply the country trade, but endeavour to secure the monopoly of executing all orders from the numerous Literary Institutions, Colleges, and schools throughout the kingdom.

In according free competition to all, the principals of these "great houses" would be exposed to an inward struggle, of which their less opulent rivals know nothing. Having obtained the books they deal in at a discount, including the "odd copies," varying from 30 to 45 per cent., they are fully sensible of the large profit they should derive from vending them to the institutions we have referred to at discounts of 10, 15, and 17½ per cent. from the retail prices (the temptation of 20 and 25 per cent. being reserved as "last cards" in the game of Competition), could they but exclude honourable rivalry, and secure the monopoly for themselves. Hence the loss of this branch of trade would be more serious to them than to the small booksellers, who do not purchase on such advantageous terms, but whose competition might prove, nevertheless, injurious. Many publishers seem to regard them as omnipotent to promote or retard the sale of their publications, and not having sufficient insight to discern how their own interest may be injuriously affected by these gentlemen, allow themselves to be persuaded



or coerced into a recognition, and even support, of the protectionist measures they adopt. But their chief source of strength lies in the fact that the partners of the greatest publishing house in London are also extensive book-merchants and retail vendors. Upon them, therefore, the principles of "protection" have more than ordinary claims, and it is only natural that they should be responded to with peculiar regard \*. Under these fostering influences, the large and powerful booksellers of London have originated, and for many years sustained, a combination to destroy competition. Sometimes this combination is flourishing and rigorously oppressive, and again lingering and feeble. At this moment it is putting forth its utmost energies, conscious, perhaps, that it is engaged in a struggle of life and death. It aims to accomplish its purpose by persuading or forcing all booksellers to enter into a bond, to which their signatures are affixed, declaring that they will not, unless under peculiar and specified circumstances, sell books to the public for less than 10 per cent. under published prices. The penalty imposed for any infringement of the compact is deprivation of the privileges of the trade; the result of which is that the offender can no longer buy books at trade price, and thus his means of subsistence are cut off.

The fiscal obstacles to cheap literature already enumerated are formidable enough, but a narrow and ignorant policy has aggravated them by the addition of self-imposed restrictions. As if Government were not sufficiently stringent in its measures of repression, the Trade itself lends its organized assistance to increase their rigour; so that of literature it may with truth be said, "its greatest foes are those of its own household." Obstacles from without may have the virtue of stimulating activity by the resistance they create, but those from within, working at the very centre of action, must inevitably entail partial paralysis upon the system. Such, we believe, have been the effects of that unwise policy adhered to by the London booksellers, and now sought to be enforced throughout the country. The mere history of that policy will suffice to expose its absurdity. We have gleaned a few facts which cannot fail to indicate the unworthy motives, disgraceful proceedings, and ludicrous attitude of an Association, the avowed object of which is to "maintain the respectability of the trade."

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\* There is another reason, it is said, why the great houses of Paternoster Row combine against the retailers of books at a low profit. The system of "ticketing" books leads to a general demand for cheapness; the great houses are large holders of school-book copyrights, and their terror is great lest schoolmasters should ask for a larger reduction than they obtain, which is now professedly 2*d.* in the shilling.

We shall carry the reader as far back as 1774, and introduce him to a Methodist shoemaker, who opened a small book-shop in a back street, with a stock in trade of a few Methodist books and magazines, which constituted his "private library," and a bagful of old divinity, which he purchased from a "holy brother lately gone to heaven." This was the famous James Lackington, "who, a few years back"—so runs the "superscription" on the effigy which adorns his "Memoirs"—"began business with five pounds, and now sells 100,000 volumes annually." From his humble commencement, Lackington persevered and prospered, till he was deemed sufficiently "respectable" to be invited to attend the trade sales, where he was initiated into a mode of doing business which suggested to him the plan he afterwards adopted, and with which his name is indelibly associated:—

"When first invited," he says, "to these trade sales, I was very much surprised to learn, that it was common for such as purchased "remainders," to *destroy* one-half or three-fourths of such books, and to charge *the full publication price*, or nearly that, for such as they kept on hand; and there was a kind of standing order amongst the trade, that in case any one was known to sell articles *under the publication price*, such a person was to be *excluded* from trade sales; so blind were copyright-holders to their own interest. For a short time I cautiously complied with this custom, but I soon began to reflect that many of these books, so destroyed, possessed much merit, and only wanted to be better known; and that if others were not worth six shillings, they were worth three, or two, and so on in proportion for higher or lower-priced books. From that time I resolved not to destroy any books that were worth saving, but to sell them off at half or quarter of the publication prices. This part of my conduct, however, though evidently highly beneficial to the community, and even to booksellers, created me many enemies among the trade; some of the meaner part of whom, instead of employing their time and abilities in attending to the increase of their own business, aimed at reducing mine; and by a variety of pitiful insinuations and dark inuendoes, strained every nerve to injure the reputation I had already acquired with the public, determined (as they wisely concluded) thus to effect my ruin; which, indeed, they daily prognosticated, with a demon-like spirit, must inevitably very speedily follow. This conduct, however, was far from intimidating me, as the effect proved directly opposite to what they wished for and expected. . . . I am still enlarging my business every year, *and the more it is extended, the cheaper I can afford to sell*; so that though I may be pursued, I cannot be overtaken, except I should (as some others have done) be so infatuated and blinded by prosperity, as to think that the public would continue their favours, even though the plan of business were reversed. But, as the first King of Bohemia kept his country shoes by him to remind him from whence he was taken, I have put a motto on the doors



of my carriage, constantly to remind me to what I am indebted for my prosperity, viz.,—‘SMALL PROFITS DO GREAT THINGS.’”\*

He then goes on to refute the charge of injuring other booksellers by his cheap system, observing that he has as much reason to complain of them for giving credit, as they of him for “selling cheap and giving *no* credit,” *credit* being as great an inducement to many a purchaser as *cheapness*; and that as an equivalent for refusing the one, he both *can* give and *ought* to give the other. The case could not be more clearly stated than is thus done by Lackington; and, though seventy years of general enlightenment and progress have elapsed, it is as applicable to present circumstances as if it had been written yesterday. Sceptical of the soundness of the principle, or of the possible success of the plan pursued by the spirited bibliopole, the trade in 1806 formed a combination with the view of extinguishing him; but it was doomed to be itself extinguished by his pointed arguments, withering sarcasm, and, above all, by the great fact of his ever-increasing success. Lackington was the first “cheap bookseller;” and no sooner did the public begin to speak about “cheap books” than the “Booksellers’ Association” was called into being—an origin sufficiently indicative of its object.

In 1828-9, a number of poor but respectable men obtained a subsistence by purchasing periodical publications, which they sold to the trade at a distance from Paternoster Row, their profit being one copy out of every twenty-five. This laborious occupation interfered with the monopoly enjoyed in that vicinity. Other offenders made their appearance near the Royal Exchange, who were satisfied with smaller profits than the “select booksellers” deemed essential. A meeting of the latter was therefore convened, when the restoration of the old Anti-Lackington Association was determined upon by a self “Constituted Committee of the Book Trade,” “with the avowed object,” in the words of Mr. Pickering, “of protecting their own interests, at the expense of those of the public. By degrees, and under the influence of threats, the wholesale publishers were induced to join them; and certain regulations were prepared, which inflicted upon every bookseller who might refuse to subscribe them, the penalty of being denied books at the usual trade price. This plan partially succeeded, and some of the wholesale vendors, who were on the Committee, actuated by envy, jealousy, or other unworthy motives, presumed, without even the courtesy of a letter, to exclude certain individuals

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\* Lackington’s Memoirs, pp. 219. 335, &c. Ed. 1792.

from their just privileges. Several industrious and honest tradesmen have thus been severely injured."

Mr. Pickering himself became a victim. He excited the ire of the trade by the publication of better and cheaper editions of what are termed "trade books"—*i. e.*, standard books the copyrights of which have expired—than those the monopolists were then offering to the public. On the bare *suspicion* that *fourth* parties had procured books, which originally came from his shop, at a cheaper rate than was deemed proper, he was denied the privileges of the trade, and his name, with those of others, was placarded in all the publishers' and booksellers' shops in London. Yet, absurd as it may seem, the "Committee" prohibited a single copy of the Regulations from being circulated for the guidance of the members of the trade. The motives for this secrecy are sufficiently intelligible; but it is surely revolting to English ideas of justice, that a man should be subject to a penalty for disobeying laws of which he is studiously kept in ignorance.

At this time there was a bookseller in Paternoster Row, named Freeman, who lost a large portion of his custom "by the large publishers *allowing gentlemen 25 and 30 per cent. as they were in the habit of doing*, before they formed the monopoly in question." But after the enactment of the new laws, recourse was had to a trick we have not space to describe, but which had the economical recommendation of at once tempting and detecting *him* to be an "underseller;" he was accordingly put on the black list and ruined. He was unable to support himself and family, having been deprived of the power of executing the orders he received. Report says, that some time afterwards a poor man, in search of employment, was seen to sink lifeless on the pavement in Holborn from sheer starvation and wretchedness, and that this man was Daniel Freeman, late of Paternoster Row. It was at the instigation of a member of the Committee, a Mr. J. Duncan, that Freeman was victimized, for the simple reason that his shop was within a few doors of that of his persecutor. Of course it is no matter of surprise that selfish men, whether individually or in combination, should not be scrupulous as to the means by which they attain their ends; still we find it difficult to believe (what, however, is the fact, as published by Mr. Pickering) that a committee of "select booksellers" should allege, as their reason for systematically ruining a certain John Knox (aged 63), of George Street, Adelphi, that he supplied the trade from that locality (the exclusive privilege being confined, apparently, to the hallowed precincts of Paternoster Row), and that he did not keep a shop, thus rendering his expenses proportionately smaller; the result of which, in



the words of the indefatigable Mr. Duncan, "was calculated to injure Mr. Marshall and Mr. Sherwood." The modest man was entirely forgetful of himself.

But the "select booksellers" reached their lowest depth of degradation by hiring spies, subject to the direction of the secretary of the Committee, a Mr. Bounds, who, at that time, did the dirty work of the Combination. In a periodical \* which had but a brief existence, and which is as remarkable for vulgarity as for common sense, there is a droll account of some of the exploits of these hirelings; but our limits forbid more than a very brief notice of them. It appears that booksellers on the black list are not always driven to despair, and that they succeed in making arrangements for purchasing, through indirect channels, those books which are denied to them directly by the publishers. The plans resorted to are various, and, in order to discover them, the houses of the offenders, at the time we refer to (twenty years ago), were beset by the spies, with instructions to follow the inmates, both male and female, wherever they went. A considerable number of these creatures were in the employment of the Committee, and in the receipt of regular wages paid to them by the secretary, at the office of the chairman, Mr. J. M. Richardson, of Cornhill! March 16th, 1831, two outlawed booksellers, Cox and Portwine, found themselves dogged by two of these employés. To test and mislead them, these booksellers took a boat to Greenwich, whither they were followed. By a lucky accident, the spies were suspected and apprehended by the police, as belonging to the "swell mob," and so the booksellers were able to transact their business unobserved. April 30th, 1831, they found themselves again under the surveillance of these detectives, when they extended their excursion to North Fleet, thence to Rochester, Chatham, and Sheerness. The spies followed them as pertinaciously as their own shadows, and while staying at the hotels, insisted, with rare fidelity, upon being constantly near them; a few days' sojourn at Sheerness, however, exhausted the finances of the officials, and they were reduced to the humiliation of asking, from the very men they were pursuing, a loan to enable them to return. But they were left on the island without a penny. Disappointed by the failure of these adventures, the Committee appointed their secretary (Mr. Bounds) to the office of spy, furnished with an assistant, and ample means for carrying on the siege for any length of time. In the hope of obtaining their monthly supplies to assist them in enduring the blockade, our per-

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\* "The Booksellers and Bookbuyers' Advocate."

sistent booksellers again sallied forth (Aug., 1831); but Bounds and his accomplice were immediately on their track. Having taken cabs to the river, the booksellers embarked, the spies with them, and were carried as far as Calais, where, for some days, the four travellers took up their quarters at the Hôtel de l'Europe. They then adjourned to the Hôtel d'Orleans at Boulogne, where they rested three days, and then took flight again for Dover. Here the booksellers separated in order to perplex their pursuers, one of whom lost his clue by intoxication, while the other, on reaching Hythe, gave up the chase, and returned to London to report his proceedings to the Committee, which, it is said, having on this occasion expended 80*l.* only to be defeated, reluctantly determined to discontinue the costly system.

The Combination we have described being powerful enough to compel the small capitalist to subscribe its arbitrary laws, or suffer the destruction of his business, we are informed, by Professor Babbage, that "nearly the whole trade, comprising about 2400 persons, signed the agreement." The chapter on "Combination of Masters against the public," in the Professor's admirable work (the title of which is at the head of our article, and two editions of which were published in 1832\*), dealt the Association a formidable blow, but unfortunately it was only stunned, for we have documentary evidence of its activity in 1833, '39, '40, and '46, though we believe that in the latter years it showed but a feeble vitality. But it seems to have recovered its strength at a meeting referred to in the following letter.

"October 3rd, 1849. Gentlemen,—We have been informed by the 'Booksellers' Committee,' that you have recently been acting contrary to the regulations for the guidance of the trade, agreed to at the Albion Tavern, on October 3rd, 1848. We beg to impress on you, that it is the determination of the Committee to carry out these regulations, and that it is our intention to support them. It is therefore, we conceive, obviously your interest to conform to these regulations; and we earnestly

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\* The following passage, from the preface to the second edition of the work, indicates the spirit with which it was met by one gentleman of the trade: "Mr. Fellowes, of Ludgate Street, who had previously been the publisher of some other volumes for me, had undertaken the publication of the first edition of the present work. A short time before its completion, I thought it right to call his attention to the Chapter in which the book trade is discussed. Mr. Fellowes, 'differing from me *entirely* respecting the conclusions I had arrived at,' then declined the publication of the volume." Mr. Charles Knight, who had no such tender scruples, published the work without hesitation, and in two months 3000 copies had been sold.



entreat you to take up your ticket, and to desist from acting in opposition to the generally expressed opinion of the trade.

We are, Gentlemen, your obedient servants,

“MESSRS. BICKERS & BUSH.”

LONGMAN, BROWN & Co.  
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & Co.  
WHITAKER & Co.  
HAMILTON, ADAMS & Co.”

The important names attached to this document failed to induce the persons addressed to conform to the “Regulations.” From causes we are unacquainted with, another general meeting was deemed necessary (we should like to know what number of booksellers is understood to constitute a *general* meeting), the result of which was the following circular and form of bond, which each bookseller is called upon to sign, or suffer the threatened penalty.

“The Committee of the BOOKSELLERS’ ASSOCIATION, appointed at the general meeting of the trade, held at Exeter Hall, on the 12th instant, beg to intimate, that a *new trade ticket* has been prepared, and will be ready for issue on Monday, the 5th of August next. It is requested that all entitled to the privileges of the trade will apply for their tickets as early as convenient, and not later than Thursday, August the 15th, as the regulations will be acted on after that day. The Committee beg to remind the trade that it is necessary to sign the Declaration agreed upon at the General Meeting before the tickets can be delivered. The Declaration lies for signature at the Secretary’s. SAMPSON LOW, *Sec.*

“169, Fleet Street, London, July 23, 1850.”

“TRADE REGULATIONS AND DECLARATION,  
*Agreed upon by the General Meeting, held at Exeter Hall, on July 12, 1850.*

“Moved by Mr. Murray, and seconded by Mr. Joseph Miles—That the business of the Association be managed by a general committee of nineteen of the principal members of the trade, elected annually from the various classes of the trade, the said committee to report their proceedings to a general annual meeting of the trade; and that the members of the committee be eligible for re-election. An acting committee of seven to be elected out of the above by the general committee. A paid secretary to be appointed.

“Regulations.—All entitled to the privileges of the trade to be registered, and a list of the same to be printed; each bookseller to be numbered. A ticket, numbered according to the list, to be presented gratuitously to all so registered. List to comprise all booksellers and stationers keeping a shop in London or within twelve miles of the General Post Office. The following declaration to be signed by each person on receiving his ticket:—

“ “We, the undersigned, do declare that we are booksellers, or book-

sellers and stationers, keeping a shop in London or within twelve miles of the General Post Office, and that we admit the following *to be the general principles on which our trade should be conducted, subject, however, to such occasional exceptions as may, in the course of trade, be found necessary*; and that we will, to the best of our ability, and subject to such exceptions, conduct our business on the following principles: viz.—

“ 1st. That we will not supply books, at trade price, except to those who are in possession of a ticket. Special trades dealing occasionally in books, connected with their trade, may be supplied with such books at trade price, *at the discretion* of each bookseller.

“ 2nd. That, *as a general rule*, no greater allowance than 10*l.* per cent., for cash, be made to private customers, unconnected with the trade, or with publishing.

“ 3rd. That, *as a general rule*, no greater allowance than 15*l.* per cent. be made to Book Societies.

“ 4th. That we will not advertise, or ticket, at less than the publication price, copyright books, unless *bonâ fide* second-hand, or unless depreciated by the publisher, or such as are notoriously unsuccessful.

“ We mutually agree, that any one *systematically* acting contrary to these regulations, after remonstrance, shall be no longer considered entitled to the privileges of the trade.’

(Signature) \_\_\_\_\_

“ Moved by Mr. Churchill, and seconded by Mr. Shaw, that the following be the committee for the ensuing year—

Bell, Mr. George.

Bentley, Mr. Richard.

Bain, Mr. James.

Bohn, Mr. H. G.

Dalton, Mr. W. H.

Gilbert, Mr. R. (Whittaker & Co.)

Griffith, Mr. W. (Grant & Griffith.)

Hatchard, Mr. Thomas.

Highley, Mr. Samuel.

Longman, Mr. William.

Miles, Mr. J. (Simpkin & Co.)

Miles, Mr. Joseph J. (Hamilton & Co.)

Murray, Mr. John.

Ollivier, Mr. John.

Parker, Mr. John W.

Rivington, Mr. Francis.

Seeley, Mr. R. B.

Smith, Mr. G. (Smith, Elder, & Co.)

Watson, Mr. J. (Nisbet & Co.)

“ Memorandum.—It is expected that all members will contribute, annually, a sum not less than half-a-crown, and not exceeding two guineas, to defray the necessary expenses of managing the trade concerns.”

We miss from this important instrument of oppression the name of the veteran Chairman, Mr. J. M. Richardson, and his Secretary, Mr. Bounds. However, we have no doubt of the energy of the new chairman, and, we are assured, the present “paid secretary” does his work with becoming diligence. Apparently secretaryships, and other lucrative offices, are often the final cause of the origin and continuance of “associa-



tions ;” but in this case we should not grudge the gentleman his wages, were they not extorted from the unwilling victims of the Committee. Although the Regulations state that “ a ticket ” will be *presented* gratuitously to all who conform, yet the modest “ memorandum ” at the end leaves us in no mistake as to who are “ expected ”—and we may add forced—to defray the expenses of the spies, of the meetings at Exeter Hall and the Chapter Coffee House, besides those of the “ paid secretary ! ”

We beg our reader’s attention to the words in the above “ Declaration ” which we have caused to be printed in italics. We presume he will infer that “ *general* ” rules, “ subject to such occasional exceptions as may be found necessary,” are capable of an interpretation and application very favourable to all who sign them. But unfortunately the interpretation of these laws is a privilege accorded only to those who made them. We know of no instance in which small booksellers have been permitted to interpret them favourably to their own interests with impunity. But now let us examine, by the light of a few facts, how the law-makers apply their own enactments, or refrain from applying them, to themselves.

I. Messrs. Orr and Co. are the agents for the publications of Messrs. W. and R. Chambers, but in order to induce Messrs. ——— and Co.\* to exert their influence for the diffusion of “ Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal,” they were allowed an extra discount from the price of that work, which advantage now amounts to about 50*l.* a year. Mr. Orr, being almost exclusively a publisher, has little to fear from the Combination, and will not sign the “ Regulations ” agreed upon at Exeter Hall. Messrs. ——— and Co. tried to force him, by refusing to sell him their books. Immediately after the first refusal he received, he wrote to the house, formally demanding whether he was to consider that they had resolved to refuse him their books, intending, if they had, to withdraw the advantage they now enjoy from the sale of “ Chambers’ Journal,” which would have been so much transferred to his own pocket. They desired one of their assistants to inform Mr. Orr, that the refusal to supply him with their publications “ was a mistake ! ”

II. At a recent meeting of the “ Combination,” at the Chapter Coffee House, a discussion arose respecting the proceedings of the Christian Knowledge Society, which, it seems, sells to subscribers and teachers of schools, &c., not only its own publications, but those which it purchases in quantities, at the trade price. The gentlemen of the Combination were of opinion

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\* The names left blank, for obvious reasons, are all known to us ; they each refer to members of the Combination, and, with the exception of the first and second cases, to different ones.

that the Society was too powerful for them to cope with, and that they were unable to compel it to raise the price of either the books it publishes or those it deals in. One of the conclave, however, addressed the chairman: "But, Mr. —, the Society sells *your* publications at the trade price?" The chairman admitted the fact, but observed it was an anomalous one, and explained the reason, viz., that the Society is a customer for about three-fifths of the entire editions of several publications, which it purchases from his firm.

III. We are credibly informed that, about four years ago, the Master of a certain College, being intimately acquainted with Mr. Norgate, of Messrs. Williams and Norgate, booksellers, suggested to them to make a proposition for supplying the College with books, of course intending to use his interest in their behalf. They did so, and offered to allow a discount of 20 per cent. Messrs. — and — tendered for the supply at 25 per cent., coupled with the further temptation that they would pay the carriage of the parcels. Of course they were the successful competitors.

IV. It is notorious that, when the library of the Bank of England was recently formed, various tenders for supplying it with books were sent in, for the most part, we believe, by persons not unmindful of the bond they had signed: Messrs. — and Co. offered to furnish them at a discount of 25 per cent., and were, of course, the successful competitors.

V. The well-known publishers of "Punch," Messrs. Bradbury and Evans, have issued several other works, but not being miscellaneous booksellers, and utterly disapproving of the Combination, they decline to become a part of it. Having occasion for some of the publications of Messrs. —, they applied for them, and received a refusal, whereupon they refused to supply Messrs. — with their publications. This was felt as a grievance. Some communications took place between the parties concerned and the secretary and chairman of the Committee, after which Messrs. Bradbury and Evans were informed, that the Committee would be glad to make them "a special exception."

VI. We could cite further evidence of inconsistency in members of the London Combination, but our last illustration of the schemes which protection forces upon the trade, shall be taken from a northern latitude, for now not only is the network of the system extended over the provinces of England, but Edinburgh and Glasgow are the seats of powerful ganglia, whose influence is felt throughout Scotland\*. A few of the

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\* All the chief booksellers of Edinburgh and Glasgow have recently signed a bond similar to that of the London combination. The "Booksellers' Protection Association," which existed in Glasgow several years, ago was extinguished by fear of prosecution for illegal conspiracy.



Glasgow booksellers, who class themselves among the *unco' gude*, would on no account be guilty of selling a book under its published price; but to be equal with their neighbours, who had no such scruples, they fell upon the following expedient:—If a person asked one of them for a book, published at 2s. 6d. for example, it was offered to him at that price, but if he objected that he could get it at 2s. elsewhere, the vendor at once overcame the difficulty by cutting open a few of the leaves of the volume, or if it chanced to be cut when published, by allowing a drop of ink to deface it,—the conscientious bibliopole being able to regard it in that condition as “second-hand,” and therefore holding himself entitled, according to orthodox principles, to sell it at a reduced price!

Now what would consistency dictate in reference to the six cases we have cited? Clearly, with respect to the first and second, the gentlemen implicated ought either to have persistently refused to supply both Messrs. Orr and Co. and the Christian Knowledge Society with their publications, or to have withdrawn themselves from the Combination. We should be willing to class the third and fourth, without further comment, under the head of “occasional exceptions” permitted by the Regulations, if we could learn that any similar privileges were enjoyed by small vendors. In justice to the firm mentioned in case IV., we must add, that when the terms on which they supplied the Bank library became notorious, for the sake of supporting the Combination, they wrote to the Secretary of the Library, complaining that the amount of books bought was not so large as they expected, which caused the purchases to be made elsewhere, and enabled the firm in question to discontinue the arrangement. Of course the publications of Messrs. Bradbury and Evans ought to have been rigorously dispensed with, not only by Messrs. —, but by the whole trade. Respecting the Scotch worthies, being little versed in casuistry, we do not hazard an opinion.

We will now briefly examine the influence of the “Booksellers’ Association” on the public. A volume, the published price of which is 12s., is sold to the trade in single copies at 9s.; if four or six be taken, according to the rules of the respective publishers, they are each charged at 8s. 6d. But should the purchaser take 25 copies at once, he is only charged for 24, at 8s. 6d. each, thus making a total discount allowed to the trade of 33 per cent., which is therefore the amount paid by the publisher for distribution, exclusive of the additional 10 per cent. retained by himself as his remuneration, when he is employed by an author. The very members of the Committee who affect the greatest concern for the interest of the small bookseller—resolved to decide for him upon the

best rules for carrying on his business—are of opinion that even he may allow a discount of 10 per cent., which indicates that *they* too are not insensible that the price is too high. For facility of illustration, we shall consider the maximum discount *usually* allowed to the trade, 33 and  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd per cent., or one-third of the retail price. The larger discounts given at the trade sales previously alluded to, and by special arrangement, to the great houses, being optional with each publisher, should not be regarded as an essential part of the system. It appears, then, that when the nominal price of a book is 12s., the publisher really sells it for about 8s., leaving 4s. to remunerate the agents who place the book in the hands of the public. Now the intelligent and enterprising portion of these agents give incontrovertible evidence that they are willing to fulfil their office for the half, and even for a third of this sum, by doing so when they dare; so that in the one case the public pays 2s., and in the other 2s. 8d. more for the volume than is necessary. It is but a poor set-off against the loss of this advantage that booksellers are now *permitted* to allow 10 per cent. They are not permitted to ticket new publications under the published price, and as competition is forbidden, and their business scope consequently restricted within very narrow limits, the majority of booksellers endeavour to make the best of a bad case, by getting the full price whenever they can.

The advantage derived by the public from the labours of the Combination Committee will be fully appreciated by our readers, if they will recall the fact, that, during the short period of its relaxation, before the general meeting at Exeter Hall in 1850, the admirable works issued by Mr. Bohn, in his Standard Library, and published at 3s. 6d. a volume, could be seen ticketed throughout the metropolis at 2s. 9d.; and will then take the trouble of ascertaining the price they must pay for the same volumes now. The difference in price which they will discover is the direct consequence of a certain “threatening letter,” dated Nov. 20, 1850 (a copy of it is before us), which was addressed by the Chairman of the Committee to Mr. Bohn, and which forced him, after long resistance, to sign the bond. At the same time it must not be forgotten that the Committee would have compelled the Christian Knowledge Society to raise its prices, had it possessed the power. When coercion fails of its object, the nonconformist is made the subject of petty persecution. If he should happen to be a publisher, an attempt is made to prevent the sale of his publications, by replying to customers who ask for them, that there are “none in town,” “none bound,” or that they are “out of print.”

We are furnished with a further illustration from the



experience of a certain importer of foreign books, who had been in the habit of allowing a discount of 25 and 30 per cent. off the advertised prices of the works he imported; but finding that these prices were a serious obstacle to extensive sale, and experiencing much difficulty in maintaining an uniform retail price in England, from the varying circumstances attendant on the purchase of books in the foreign markets, he determined to supply the public with the works he imported at the cost price of importation with the addition only of a remunerative commission, which step involved a discontinuance of the usual discount to the trade. He announced this intention by public advertisement. To his surprise he was summoned before the Committee, and was threatened with excommunication if he did not suppress the obnoxious advertisement. Having signed the "Regulations" (under protest), he had faithfully adhered to them with respect to English books, and no charge was brought against him of having violated them; but now an attempt was made to extend the laws of the Combination, which when enacted had reference only to English books, to all works imported from abroad. This he felt bound to resist. While, however, declining the jurisdiction of the conclave, he furnished its members with the reasons which led him to act as he had done. They were of no avail. That he should be allowed to manage his own affairs to the best of his ability, or to adjust his arrangements to meet the exigency of circumstances, was a proposition altogether too heretical to be entertained. In fact, he was accused by the chairman of "violating all principle!" "Our ancient percentage, and no change," was the demand sought to be enforced. He was allowed ten days to consider and recant. In the interim he wrote to the Committee to the effect, that as the distance of his house from Paternoster Row rendered it inconvenient for the wholesale houses to purchase from him, and as he was convinced that the nominal price of the books imported had been fixed much too high, merely for the sake of allowing a large discount to the trade, he determined on a former occasion to make such a reduction in the prices as, while enabling him still to allow 10 per cent., would be likely to result in an increased demand for the works in question; but that the proceedings of a competitor caused an immediate return to the old system, although he remained convinced of the soundness of the plan he had tried to establish. He further explained, that the works he deals in, being imported only in small quantities, are necessarily purchased through an agent to whom a commission is paid, as direct application to each publisher would be too laborious to be practicable when the number of copies required generally varies

from 1 to 6, and only in rare instances reaches 12 or 20. Having added to the original charge the above commission, the amount expended in freight and duty, and the importer's profit, the total cost of the books is so augmented by the time they reach London, that if 25 or 30 per cent. more be added, in order that it may be taken off again as a discount to the trade, the retail price becomes almost a prohibitory one, and thus acts injuriously both on the public as consumers and on him as an importer, by preventing the growth of his business. These considerations, and the intention of guarding himself from the effects of the competition he had already experienced, had determined him, he said, to adopt the system of offering his books to the public at the lowest prices at which he could afford to import them; and, after mature deliberation, he had arrived at the conclusion that it would be inexpedient to change it. He concluded by stating, that several eminent publishers concurred with him in the opinion that the rules of the Association were not intended to refer to foreign books, but that, if the Committee entertained an opposite view, he should still feel that he owed it both to himself and the public to adhere to the resolution he had formed.

The reply to this statement was a communication from the Secretary of the Combination, informing him that his ticket had been "cancelled," and that the fact would be duly placarded in the shops of the metropolis; the result of which is, that the majority of the publishers now decline to supply him with their publications. To the honour of Mr. Bentley, it ought to be stated that, in consequence of these proceedings, he has withdrawn his name from the Association, and that many years ago he exerted his influence in favour of a person whom the Combination likewise endeavoured to crush.

It will doubtless occur to our readers, that though the members of the Combination may resolve to injure nonconformists to the utmost of their power, yet, in so numerous a body as the London booksellers, there must be many who concur with them, and who would be disposed to assist them in procuring privately such books as they require. There are, in fact, many who express sympathy, and still more who give it tacitly; but active help is not so easily rendered. We have no evidence that the spy-system is not still in force, but if not, another plan for detection, at once more refined and effective, has, we understand, been adopted; viz., to mark the copies of each work sold to the trade in such a manner that, when they are bought of the retail vendor, the publisher can by examination determine through what intermediate agent they were obtained. For instance, suppose a retail bookseller, A. B.,—having refused



to subscribe the Regulations—were desirous of replenishing his stock, and were to induce a friend, C. D., standing well in the trade, to buy for him; the publishers, or wholesale dealers, before delivering the books to C. D., would put in each a private mark representing his (C. D.'s) name, so that immediately on their being exposed in A. B.'s shop, the "paid secretary," by purchasing copies for examination, could at once detect the offenders. Such petty expedients would be simply ludicrous but for the seriousness of their results. To say nothing of the monstrous assumption implied in the attempt to dictate to thousands of men the terms on which they shall carry on their business, the palpable effect of that dictation is to heighten the price of works and thus prevent their diffusion; while the injury resulting to writers, though less obvious, is, as we shall endeavour to show, not less real and extensive.

Lying on our table is a printed copy, occupying two folio pages, of a circular which was signed by the Committee of the Combination, and then industriously carried round London for the purpose of signature by all the booksellers who could be persuaded or intimidated into lending their names to such a document. It is dated, "London, February, 1852," and the preamble runs thus:—

"The retail Booksellers of London and Westminster, speaking also on behalf of the other booksellers of the United Kingdom, having heard that an appeal has been made to some influential authors against the regulations of the bookselling trade, beg leave respectfully to state the grounds of those regulations."

After a series of paragraphs, equally remarkable for their cogent reasoning and felicitous style, and admirably fitted to obfuscate the retailer, in order to lure him into giving his signature, the document is wound up with this triumphant peroration:—

"The bookselling system of England is the growth of ages: it was defended by Dr. Johnson in the year 1756 (see his life by Boswell): it is superior to that of any other country, and better for all parties:—for the public, on account of the greater facility, convenience, and rapidity with which any book can be obtained in any part of the kingdom, and at a fixed price, which can always be known beforehand: such advantages do not, to such an extent, exist in foreign countries\*:

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\* This ignorant error is refuted by what is, from the protectionist's point of view, the far more complete publishing organization of Germany already mentioned. The German publishers have also a regular system of fixed prices, which are advertised in the same way as those of the English publishers, and from which a discount of 25 and 33½ per cent. is allowed even when books are distributed *à condition*, with a credit to the next fair, and sometimes longer; but if the books are paid for in cash, they occasionally allow seven copies as six.

for the trade, on account of the fixed and regular rate of profit, although that profit is not larger, on the whole, than that of booksellers in any other country, or than any other trade in this: *for authors, who are better paid in England than anywhere else, chiefly on account of this regular bookselling system, which enables a publisher to judge what he may calculate upon.*"

Authors of these favoured isles, think of the blessings you enjoy! Hush your notorious murmurings, and be thankful! Is it not demonstrated that you are better paid in England than elsewhere, *as a natural consequence* "of this regular book-selling system, which enables a publisher to judge what he may calculate upon?"\* Alas! we fear the sensibilities and perceptions of Mr. Macaulay and Mr. Gladstone are too hardened and obtuse to be affected by this touching appeal. And

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\* The following is extracted from a Contribution by G. P. R. James, Esq., to the "Journal of the Statistical Society" for 1843. "Although it is impossible for us to state the number of copies of popular works that are sold in France, so as to make a comparison with the numbers sold in England, where perhaps it might be equally difficult to arrive at the facts, yet we have received from a source on which we can rely, such statements regarding the remuneration to French authors as will at once show that the sale of books in that country must be infinitely more extensive than in our own.

"There are two ways, we are told, of remunerating authors in France. The first and most ordinary with writers of no great repute is to fix a certain sum per copy and volume printed, varying from one to two francs. Thus for a work of one volume, of which an edition of 2000 copies is printed, an author of no high repute would gain from 2000 to 4000 francs, or from 80% to 160%, and if of more than one volume at the same rate. These volumes are generally in 12mo, and it is necessary to remark that each volume in this calculation does not contain more literary matter than one-half an ordinary English volume, post octavo. Thus, for a composition equalling in extent one volume of an English romance, a French writer of the second or third class gains from 160% to 320%, as much, or more, than the most celebrated writers in England can obtain per volume for their works. At the first outset of their literary career, the famous Balzac and the no less famous George Sand were paid at the rate of two francs per volume for every copy printed, yielding them a profit of about 8000 francs for each work. But as their reputation increased and their fame spread this system was abandoned, and very large sums indeed have been given for the copyright of various works by each of these authors. Thus we are credibly informed, that for a work in two volumes, in amount of literary matter not more than one volume of an English romance, Balzac can at any time command the sum of 30,000 francs, or more, which is a much higher rate of remuneration than has ever been obtained by any English writer. We find that Chateaubriand, for the copyright of his complete works, after the first sale of many of them was past, received from the publisher, L'Advocat, the sum of 500,000 francs, or 20,000%, and we are assured he once asked 100,000 Prussian dollars, or about 15,000%, for his memoirs alone. M. de Lamartine received from the publisher, Gosselin, 80,000 francs, or 3200%, for his 'Voyage en Orient,' or Travels in the East, and 20,000 francs, or 800%, for his 'Harmonies Poétiques.' Victor Hugo's drama of 'Hernani' produced 12,000 francs, or 480%, by the sale of the first and second editions, besides all the profits derived



yet we have abundant ground for stating, that it was drawn up and signed for the especial behoof and edification of these gentlemen. They were known to have expressed their strong disapproval of the Combination, and it was felt that, if their views should become known, the weight of their reputation and influence would powerfully determine the current of public opinion. Six months ago Mr. Gladstone designated the association of monopolists as

“A combination alike in principle unjust, and in practice injurious, both to the public and those engaged in trade.” He generously added —“I would advise exhausting all the means of friendly persuasion before placing them in a position before the world which, whatever view they may now take, they would soon, I think, find to be damaging and disagreeable.”

The reader will infer from the following extract (from a letter addressed to us a short time since), what answer the literary protectionists received, when they presented him with the circular above referred to :—

“I have made it known to more than one prominent publisher of my acquaintance in writing very recently, that only feelings of personal regard have restrained me, up to this time, from taking more public steps in the matter.”

Mr. Gladstone has furnished a practical comment on his own words, by supplying certain nonconforming booksellers with his pamphlets on Italy, which his publisher—being a member of the Combination—could not sell to those persons.

But now let us examine the effects upon the author, “of this regular bookselling system.” Mr. Babbage’s analysis of the whole expense of conveying his own book into the hands of the public, shows that the retail price, 6s., on 3052 copies, produces 915*l.* 12s. ; that of this sum 266*l.* 0s. 11*d.* was paid for printing, paper, and taxes on paper and advertisements ; and 63*l.* 11s. 8*d.* was deducted by the publisher as his commission, leaving the enormous sum of 279*l.* 15s. 4*d.* to be divided among the wholesale and retail booksellers, as the payment for their labour in distributing the work, and incurring the risks of debt incidental to the operation. But Mr. Babbage has omitted one important item, viz., that every twenty-fifth copy of the work is also given to the distributors ; 25 being sold as 24. This makes a difference of 4 per cent. on the total amount realized by the publisher,

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from the representation on the stage, which have been calculated at about 2000*l.* ‘Henri III.’ brought in to Alexandre Dumas, a very inferior writer, 30,000 francs, or 1200*l.* Besides these we might cite the celebrated work of Monsieur Thiers, the ‘History of the French Revolution,’ which was sold for a larger sum than any we have named, and also the ‘History of the Consulate,’ sold, before it was written, for more than the ‘Revolution.’”

and thus adds 25*l.* 8*s.* to the distributor's share, making it 305*l.* 3*s.* 4*d.*, while the author's share is diminished in the same proportion, minus the publisher's commission of 10 per cent.; so that, instead of being, as stated by Mr. Babbage, 306*l.* 4*s.*, it is only 283*l.* 6*s.* 11*d.* That gentleman had to pay to the wholesale and retail booksellers one-third of the amount realized by the sale of the whole edition of 3052 copies, calculated at the retail price, in addition to the 63*l.* 11*s.* 8*d.* deducted as commission by the publisher. The booksellers received 21*l.* 16*s.* 5*d.* more for distributing it than the author received for writing it! Will any man who is free from the trammels of an antiquated system persist in affirming that the author is benefited by such an arrangement as this? But if the immense difference between the published price and the price at which the book is sold, viz., one-third, must obtain, a great advantage could not fail indirectly to arise from the establishment of free-trade in the sale of books, for then an inevitable and legitimate competition would cause the vendors to offer to retail purchasers the work published at 6*s.* for 5*s.* 6*d.*, 5*s.*, and 4*s.* 6*d.*, in proportion to the capital, enterprise, and skill employed; the certain result of which would be a larger sale, and therefore increased profit and reputation to the author. But let us suppose that, after liberating the booksellers, the shackles were removed from the publishers also, and that, being able to publish on any terms they pleased, one of them were to issue a volume the size of Mr. Babbage's, and at the same price, but with this difference, that he should charge the trade 5*s.* instead of 4*s.*, and give no "twenty-fifth copy." The result would be a sale equally extensive with that secured by the present system, and assuming the edition the same as that of Mr. Babbage's work, the profit to the author would be 435*l.* 18*s.* 11*d.*, instead of—as in Mr. Babbage's case—283*l.* 6*s.* 11*d.* To arrive at these conclusions we used no great concentration of arithmetical power, neither did we find it necessary to consult Mr. De Morgan's "Essay on Probabilities;" it would seem, therefore, that authors need not absolutely despair, even though "the regular bookselling system of England," which "is the growth of ages," should share the fate of other equally beneficent institutions, since we have shown that it is not quite indispensable to "enable a publisher to judge what he may calculate upon."

On the other hand, the positive advantages which would result from an abolition of this protective system may help us to bear the loss with becoming resignation. In the first place, the author would be more amply compensated for his works; secondly, their increased sale would give to the



publisher a larger commission, and, when speculating on his own account, a larger profit; thirdly, one of the much paraded but never accomplished objects of the Combination, "THE RESPECTABILITY OF THE TRADE," would be realized; for immediately that a healthy competition were possible, men of intellect and capital would become booksellers, and by their relative success would take rank among their brethren according to their merit and intelligence, whereas the present system holds up the stupid and ignorant, and represses the enterprising and well-informed to one monotonous and indiscriminate level; and lastly, all readers would hail with satisfaction a reform by which they might obtain their books from 10 to 25 per cent. cheaper than they do now.

In view of these advantages it will very naturally be asked, "why is the old system maintained, since, if the publishers resisted it, it could not stand a single day?" A full answer to this question would demand more space than we can give to it. But we believe the chief reason is, that the great publishers shrink from the labour and responsibilities which are conditions essential to the management of their business on a sound and right basis. They find it most convenient to contract the sphere of their operations and risks as much as possible, and this they do by endeavouring to confine the sale of their publications to the large wholesale houses, which are tempted by terms far more advantageous than those offered to the mass of booksellers, both in reference to discount and credit, to buy in large quantities, and are thus enabled to supply the trade generally as cheaply as if application were made to the publishers themselves. Such a plan, of course, renders a thoroughly good understanding between the contracting parties extremely desirable, and hence if the book-merchant feels it necessary to fortify his position against the possibility of competition, it is to the publisher he makes his first appeal, compliance with which he demands in return for his valuable aid. The publisher is thus induced to support a scheme notoriously opposed to the interests of literature and to the diffusion of his own publications. The great publisher has a right to dictate his *own* terms, but he is only guilty of tyranny in conspiring with the monopolist book-merchants to impose them as a stereotyped system on the smaller houses. Moreover, while he is warranted in giving the enormous discounts of 40, 45, and even 50 per cent. from the published prices of his *own* books, for the reasons alleged above, it is hard upon the author for whom he publishes "on commission" to diminish his profit by subjecting his book to the same system. We presume it is from a similar desire of concentration that English publishers manifest such reluctance to adopt the con-

tinental plan of sending their publications to the booksellers in town and country “à condition,” or “on sale or return.”

It seems to us that the radical vice of English publishing consists in the low prices at which books are sold to the trade compared with those at which they are advertised to the public. If this difference were diminished at least one-half, the combination which has occupied so much of our attention would inevitably be broken up. It is probable that such large discounts were essential when the facilities of transit and communication were small compared with those now established; but the revolution effected by Watt, Stevenson, and Rowland Hill, necessitates a corresponding change in the rules and practices of business, and especially in those exceptional ones peculiar to the distribution of books. We doubt not the experienced men of the trade could devise a remedy for existing evils, were they intent on readjusting their arrangements conformably to the new conditions and demands of the time; but we would venture to suggest—if the old (wrong) *principle* of allowing a discount from the published price be retained—that when a reform is effected, the rules of its application should be so far modified as to permit of a diminution of discount, up to a certain point, in proportion as the price of books increases. It is especially desirable that booksellers should be induced to take an interest in low-priced books, by obtaining a greater proportionate profit upon them, because of the great comparative cost and difficulty (as already explained) of making them known by means of advertising. Of course, in any case, the absolute profit would be less than that on larger works. We would also suggest that the discounts fixed upon should not be allowed unless a certain number of copies of a work be purchased, which is the only condition constituting a claim to that advantage\*.

\* The following table exhibits a plan by which the prices of books would remain fixed, and by which the advantage, or discount, to the wholesale purchaser would be graduated according to price, and would be given in the form of “extra copies.”

PRICE PER COPY.							
1d. to 1s. inclusive.		1s. to 2s. inclusive.		2s. to 3s. inclusive.		3s. to 4s. inclusive.	
Copies.	Per cent. of Discount.	Copies.	Per cent. of Discount.	Copies.	Per cent. of Discount.	Copies.	Per cent. of Discount.
4 as 3=25		5 as 4=20		6 as 5=17		4 as 3½=12½	5 as 4½=10
25 „ 17=32		25 „ 18=28		25 „ 19=24		7 „ 6=14	9 „ 8=11
50 „ 32=36		50 „ 35=30		50 „ 37=26		25 „ 20=20	25 „ 21=16
100 „ 60=40		100 „ 65=35		100 „ 70=30		50 „ 39=22	50 „ 40=20
						100 „ 75=25	100 „ 78=22



The organization of the Post Office is destined to exert a great influence as a distributor of books. Let us see what may be done already by its aid. We will again take Mr. Babbage's work as an illustration. We have stated that it was published at 6s., and that it was sold to the trade at 4s. We find that it was under a pound in weight, and would therefore pass through the Post Office to any part of the United Kingdom for 6*d.*, and that more swiftly than by any other method, while it can be ordered, by letter, for 1*d.* Now had Mr. Babbage's publisher advertised the work at 4s. 6*d.*, sold it to the trade in quantities at 4s., and offered to send it by post for 5s., the trade would have gained a profit of 11 per cent.; the author would have gained as much as he did by the present system; the public would reap the advantage of the greatly-reduced price, having to pay only 4s. 6*d.* in town and 5s. throughout the country, instead of 6s. as now; and whenever the book was transmitted by post, the publisher would himself retain the 11 per cent. profit—otherwise given to the trade—as his remuneration for engaging in a retail transaction. Can it be doubted that, with so rapid and punctual a means of transit now available, the price of books will be reduced, and hence their circulation extended?

But there is one boon more we would ask from Rowland Hill, to make the system complete; viz., that he should befriend the small books. While we have been writing this article permission has been given to send several books in one parcel through the Post Office, weight only being the condition of price. So that now four books each weighing nearly  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. may be sent in one wrapper for 6*d.* This is a step in the right direction, but what is still needed is, permission to send *single copies* of small books at the same proportionate rate *per copy*, or rather per ounce, as is now charged on parcels weighing 1 lb. and upwards. A volume which is sold for 10s. may be forwarded by post for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on its cost, but for shilling and sixpenny pamphlets the public has to pay respectively 50 and 100 per cent. on the cost for transmission by the same medium.

Who shall estimate the benefits likely to arise from a removal of the taxes and restrictions on literature which we have now passed in review? We will only attempt, in concluding, to recapitulate separately the principal results of our inquiries. The *aggregate* advantage of perfect freedom from the oppressions indicated we have not space to dwell upon. The *demonstrable* effect of the Paper Duty is to raise the price at least  $2\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* per pound, but the further improvements and diminution of price which free competition would produce, and the increase in employment which would result from the vigour

with which the manufacture would extend and flourish were it not repressed, can only be generally inferred from the wonderfully rapid growth of those branches of trade upon which excise duties are no longer permitted to exert their baneful influence: we should certainly cease to hear that the number of British paper manufacturers is diminishing. We have shown that though the Tax on Advertisements is insignificant as a source of revenue, and though its abolition might not be attended with such advantages as would result from the removal of the paper tax, still it presses injuriously upon the medium of communication between buyers and sellers, and is an especial burden on literature, increasing in weight in proportion as the price of the books to be advertised diminishes. The Newspaper Stamp, though it may be held to lie within the province we have surveyed, we have preferred to leave to the care of those veteran reformers whose attention it has attracted. The tax on authors and publishers for the support of the National Libraries we have also touched upon lightly. But the fact that the total amount extorted from the literary section of the community for the benefit of the whole is small, will not, we trust, continue to be put forward in vindication of this outrage of justice.

The last tax we had to consider, viz., that on foreign books, we have shown to be, though trivial in amount, a serious hindrance to the extensive importation of Continental and American literature, while we have urged its still greater importance as a means of negotiation with the American Government for the reciprocal and simultaneous abolition of this duty on both sides of the Atlantic. Such a measure, we have hinted, would be a step towards the establishment of an international copyright which would accord to British as well as American authors their just rights, would contribute immensely to the cheapening and circulation of the means of knowledge, and would put an end to the system of literary appropriation now so current, together with the monstrous legal dangers attendant on importing English books with American titles and "improvements." We hope Mr. Disraeli will discern in the fiscal restrictions we have enumerated an eligible opportunity for distinguishing himself during his ministerial career. Books have not often such a friend at court as a literary Chancellor of the Exchequer.

But the last, though not the least important, part of our subject—"the regular bookselling system"—can only be dealt with by the large body of authors whom it intimately concerns, and by the powerful voice of public opinion. We are glad of it. Government is not swift to destroy abuses; but when the in-



telligence of the people is arrayed against them, their doom is already pronounced. Under any circumstances, whatever system of discount or no discount to the trade be adopted, it is futile to devise an artificial remedy for those assumed evils which grow inevitably out of the relative conditions of men, and the nature of things. An attempt to legislate for a uniformity of price is one of those results of ignorance which we expect from a petty despot of the East, but which we find it difficult to credit in an assemblage of Englishmen at the Chapter Coffee-house, guided by the practical knowledge of such men as the Messrs. Longman and Mr. Murray! Personal interests must be appealed to with unusual force, or these gentlemen would never permit themselves to be dragged into such an absurdity. Their labour is not only endless and ineffectual, but, what is worse, it is a premium on dishonesty. Few dare openly to defy their decrees, but there are many who will disobey them, and thus the honest man, having, by compulsion, pledged his allegiance to a system which he disapproves, sees his customers transfer themselves to one who, in form, is equally committed to the same system, but who secretly violates it by selling his books under the prescribed price. And this is a constant occurrence\*. We leave it to the public to determine whether its own vital interests in literature, as well as those of the author, the publisher, and the bookseller, shall be subject to the stifling control of a "select" number of monopolists, in the much-abused name of "respectability;" and whether it will submit to the alternative of either paying for its literature a higher price than is necessary, or of recognising a system analogous to smuggling, by ignominiously making its purchases in secret, as though it were guilty of a crime.

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\* Only the other day a person known to us went into the shop of a bookseller, a member of the compact, and asked for a new work published at 16s.; the book was purchased for 13s., the purchaser receiving from the bookseller, together with the large discount, a significant wink, and admonition, "but you mustn't tell the publishers."

## APPENDIX.

[*The following Articles are reprinted, by permission, from "The Times" of March 30th and April 16th respectively.*]

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A CONTROVERSY, in which the public interests are very closely concerned, has just now, after some years' duration, assumed a critical appearance. One of the most quiet and respectable of our national trades is seriously disturbed by commotions within its own body, and it is by no means clear to what result these differences may ultimately tend. The booksellers of the kingdom are at strife among themselves; they are united in combinations and disunited by secessions, while oppression and hardship are respectively practised and endured by those who can exert power and those who are compelled to respect it. To make these proceedings intelligible to the general reader will require a little preliminary exposition.

The bookselling trade has a character peculiarly its own. It is composed of two classes, which may be termed those of manufacturers and retailers. The manufacturers are the publishers—that is to say, those tradesmen whose business consists in printing and producing the compositions of authors in the form of books. These books are subsequently distributed to the public through the agency of retailers, or booksellers proper, who obtain them from the publishers and sell them to their customers at a profit. A book is a commodity which, for very obvious reasons, always comes into the market with a fixed and definite price, and unless, therefore, the bookseller could secure an advance upon this price in his own sales, which is a very improbable supposition, it is plain that he must either go without profit or get some reduction of the original price in his particular favour. The latter system is that in use. A book has *two* prices—the publication price and the trade price; the former being that at which the public are expected to purchase it, and the latter that at which the retail salesman is permitted to procure it; his own profits, of course, being made out of the difference between the two. It is upon the disposal of this difference that the controversy in question has arisen.

Nominally, the trade price is constituted by a deduction of one-fourth, or 25 per cent., from the publication price, but practically even this considerable difference is so increased by customary allowances of reckoning that the actual deduction amounts to not less than one-third. In other words, if a book is published at the price of 15s. a copy to the general purchaser, a bookseller can procure it for the purposes of retail trade at the price of 10s., so that there remains 5s. to cover his expenses and return him a profit on the transaction. Now, it would naturally be concluded that the publishers having disposed of their commodities to the retail dealers at a price regulated by known considerations, would



have no further concern in the matter. It must be understood that this trade price represents the *bonâ fide* cost of the whole book. It includes the expenses of printing, binding, and so forth, together with the remuneration of the writer, and when this price has been paid by the retail dealer to the publishing house both publisher and writer ought to have received their fair dues as assessed by themselves. The publishers, however, refuse to terminate their interest in a book with its sale to the retail dealer. They follow the retail dealer into his own shop, and insist on dictating the disposal of the profits they leave him. It is obvious that if a retailer has procured a book for 10s. which is presumptively saleable at 15s., he has a very considerable margin to operate upon. He may either demand the full value of 15s. and pocket his 30 per cent. gain, or he may reduce the gain upon each book with a view of obtaining either a larger sale or quicker returns. He may sell his book for 11s., 12s., 13s., or any sum, in short, between 10s. and 15s., according to the temper of his customers or the accidental character of his business. Nothing could seem more natural or proper than that these arrangements should be left, as in all other trades, to the judgment of the retailers themselves. But here the publishers step in and say, "You shall not enjoy any such freedom. You shall not dispense with any portion of your personal profits except to such an extent as we prescribe. To attract a cash customer, you may take off 1s. 6d. from your 15s., but no more. The rest you must put in your own pocket, or you shall get no more publications of ours."

Such is the language held by the publishers, and their conditions are enforced by an organized system of coercion. An association has been constituted to which all booksellers within 12 miles of the General Post-Office are invited to belong. The members of this body sign a declaration to the effect that they will not sell books to any general customer, even for cash payment, at a greater discount than 10 per cent., or, in other words, at a less profit than 23 per cent. to themselves. In return for this pledge of fraternity they receive a ticket, and to none but the holders of this ticket will the publishers supply any books except at the full publication price; so that any refractory retailer can be absolutely deprived at a single blow of all such portion of his business as consisted in the sale of new books. Any bookseller willing to content himself with smaller profits than those dictatorially assigned to him is described as an "underseller," and is forthwith deprived of his trade ticket by the Executive Council of the Association, and placarded throughout London as a man with whom, under pain of similar penalties, all trade dealings are interdicted. Against this imperious proscription many booksellers have rebelled, and have applied, in their straits, to the authors themselves for the works which the publishers refused to supply, till at length the system has been found insupportable, and an appeal is made to the public.

It will, no doubt, be alleged by the advocates of the existing practice that it commands the assent of the vast majority of the trade, as testified by their subscription to the rules. This, however, can be no valid evidence, for, in the face of such absolute powers as we have described, it is plain that the number of those venturing to dissent would be ex-

ceedingly few. Conditions may be obviously dictated to booksellers without much resistance by those who can debar them from obtaining any books to sell. We have attentively perused a circular, bearing date last month, in which the regulations of the Amalgamated Publishers are directly defended, but we cannot discover any valid reason for this anomalous interference with the free course of competition and the natural operations of trade. On the other hand, as the great publishing houses are generally retailers themselves, and as they thus take profit in a double capacity, they would seem to have an obvious interest in exerting their powers as publishers to enhance their remuneration as booksellers. We hardly see how the difference between the actual cost of a book's production and its price to the general purchaser can represent anything but the cost of the agency by which the books are distributed; and if this agency can be performed, as is plain, upon terms more reasonable than those assumed, it is difficult to imagine why the public should be excluded from the benefit of the condition. If the author and publisher of a book are both remunerated by a price of 10s. a copy, and agents can be found in abundance to undertake its distribution for 2s. more, why should these agents be compelled to demand and the public to pay a sum of 13s. 6d. instead of 12s.? These considerations, on appeal to us duly made, we have felt bound to submit to the verdict of opinion. If anything can be said for the system which is not apparent on its surface, the readers of *The Times* will doubtless hear of it; but in the meantime we must express our belief that the remonstrant booksellers have shown a very good case.

We seem to have been quite justified in the anticipation that our readers would soon learn from one side or the other whatever was to be said for or against the principles of the Booksellers' Association, as affecting the course of the trade. Since the appearance of our remarks, the whole subject has been discussed in our columns by a long succession of correspondents, and the particular question in dispute, as we yesterday reported, was argued at Stratheden House before a Court of Honour assembled for the purpose. Mr. W. Longman, as leading counsel of the Association, took occasion to discard with forensic dignity all "letters, statements, and articles which had appeared in print"—a proceeding somewhat unreasonable in a distinguished printer, and rather disrespectful to his constituents besides, for the correspondence alluded to came principally from his own party, and was commenced by a letter from his own hand. Lord Campbell, who figures as the Cranworth of this new Executive Council, very properly requested that the arguments on one side, no less than on the other, might be brought formally under his cognizance, and thus relieve him from the necessity of extrajudicial inquiry; but as the general reader was already acquainted with the case produced on Wednesday, and can sufficiently anticipate that presently to follow, he may perhaps find his opinions verging towards the form of a conclusion before the delivery of his Lordship's judgment. For ourselves, we must needs be sensitive enough to the principles in dispute. Over and above our duty to the public, we cannot but entertain in the "cause of literature" a concern as lively and personal as consists with



our corporate existence, for whatever pertains to letters pertains to us, and if the "interests of authors" are as closely involved in the question as Mr. Murray conceives, there is little danger of our bias being opposed to this gentleman's opinion. We must now, however, plainly declare that we think the Association has failed to establish its case, and that such hesitation as we might formerly have felt has vanished before the exposure of the subject.

Why should the publisher of a book, having calculated the fair cost of every ingredient in its production, and fixed a price accordingly at which he can deliver it to the retail dealer with a due profit to the author and himself, proceed to step out of his proper capacity, and charge himself with the regulation of the retail dealings? To this question the publishers reply, that the case in dispute is not their own, but that of the retail dealers only; that the Association is essentially a society, not of publishers, but of booksellers, and that the former have only contributed their indispensable co-operation in deference to the representations of the latter. We cannot forbear remarking that the documentary evidence before us is scarcely reconcilable with the idea of such disinterestedness on the part of the great publishing firms; but we are ready to accept their present avowals, and to exclude them altogether from consideration, according to their own request, merely observing that in this case they must at once desist from opposition to the unbiassed views of the trade, and that they owe something to the public at large, as well as to their immediate customers.

From this point, therefore, the argument, as far as we can methodize the expositions delivered, appears to take the following form. It is urged that the interests of authors, as well as those of readers, demand that the greatest possible currency should be given to new publications, that this currency can only be created by a multiplicity of shops, and that this multiplicity of shops could never be maintained except by a system repressing competition and securing all dealers alike in a fixed rate of profit. If publishers, it is said, like other wholesale dealers, distributed their books to all applicants indiscriminately, without concerning themselves about the further sale of their wares, the result would be a monopoly of the retail trade by five or six large houses, "to the injury," as Mr. W. Longman prophesies, "of literature, the inconvenience of the public, and the ruin of hundreds of booksellers." These are doubtless prospective calamities, but we scarcely see why they must be expected to ensue. By the present system, when a book has been produced, and is ready for delivery to the public at a certain price, say 15s., an organized combination of publishers insures that it shall not be purchasable under 1l., although the difference between the greater and the less of these sums cannot possibly represent anything but the cost of distribution, and such a duty would be eagerly accepted on much lower terms. What the "interests of literature and the convenience of the public" manifestly require is, simply that books shall be sold and salable in the greatest possible number, and all experience is against the conclusion that an extension of sale can follow from a magnified price. Surely Mr. Macaulay's "History"—which seems to be the favourite example—would be sold with greater rapidity at 26s. than at 29s.

Doubtless there may be advantages from a multiplication of book-shops, but why these agreeable resorts should necessarily be diminished in number by the opening of the trade we really cannot discover. We presume the anticipation must be, that whereas only a much larger business could be remunerative at a reduced profit, the trade would thus be collected round five or six centres, to the destruction of small establishments. But is it not, reasonable to expect that with a *general* reduction of prices there would spring up a general increase of business done? May not *each* bookseller hope to sell two copies for one when he takes 12 per cent. profit instead of 25? And, even if the number of establishments should be lessened, would not the interests of literature and the convenience of the public receive more than a compensation from the universal fall in prices? Surely, if a greater number of books find their way into circulation, the interests of "literature and the public" would gain, although the number of retail shops should be diminished. As to the booksellers themselves, although, as we have before remarked, we attach but little weight to an acquiescence which is as likely to be due to coercion as conviction, we can easily believe that a considerable number of established houses would concur in approving a system which preserves them from the spur of competition, and places the enterprising and the sluggish on the same dead level. But this, though it may be termed an advantage to the trade, can certainly not be for the "convenience of the public or the interests of literature."

"The principal object of the Booksellers' Association," said Mr. W. Longman, "was to prevent those who received the privileges of the trade on certain implied conditions from enjoying those privileges without fulfilling those conditions—the main privilege being a certain discount from the retail price, and its condition being that this retail price should be observed." But surely this is a strange description of a plain commercial transaction. The publisher of books is a wholesale manufacturer. The price called the "trade price" is the wholesale price of his commodities, a price which is so fixed as duly to remunerate all parties who have been hitherto concerned in their production. Beyond the receipt of this price, even by his own showing in the present dispute, he has no proper concern. The "retail price," that is to say, the price which results from the addition to the wholesale price of the cost of distribution, is no business of his; and when a dealer applies to him for a certain consignment of books, it is hard to see how he is asking a greater "privilege" than a tradesman of any other description who carries his custom to a wholesale house, or how the wholesale house in this case, any more than others, should assume the right of affixing "conditions" to the bargain. In point of fact, the publishers themselves now admit that they have no such right, but that they merely exercise the power in compliance with the assumed interests of their customers. But are these interests those of the public? or are they such as should be supported by a system of organized coercion?

It is exceedingly amusing, and should be not a little instructive, to see how piously the name and theory of actual "Protection" are eschewed by the advocates of the Association. As if conscious that



such doctrines, purely avowed, would be the ruin of their cause, they earnestly proclaim themselves Free traders, but argue that theirs constitutes an exceptional case to the overruling principles of free trade. They declare one and all, with great statistical display, that upon less than the present profits the booksellers "can't live." If this is indeed the case, there can be no necessity for an Association to prevent them from doing so. If a bookseller *must* charge 25 per cent. profit, he will do so under the operation of necessity much more surely, and far more naturally, than under the dictation of the Executive Council. It is certainly possible, as Mr. W. Longman predicts, that books under such freedom of trade might be sold "at one price in one street and at another in another," according as one dealer found it practicable to "live" upon less than another; but this, we take it, is a very general aspect of wholesome trade. To put the whole case in a very few words, the natural course is for publishers to supply all comers with all they ask for at the trade or wholesale price, and leave the price to the public to be regulated, as in all other trades, by the arrangements of the retailers. Whether this might create any material changes of business we cannot take upon ourselves to say; but it is, at any rate, not likely to cause so much embarrassment as an artificial protective system, which has actually set the trade by the ears, and has driven its advocates, like engineers upon "strike," to sue for the warrant of an umpire, as something less obnoxious than the tyranny of a club.

# THE BOOKSELLING SYSTEM.

[*The following Letter was addressed to the Editor of "The Athenæum," who caused it to be put in type, but deferred its publication.*]

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SIR,

THREE months ago I began to supply the public with American books at prices about 30 per cent. lower than those previously current. This step involved a discontinuance of the large discount usually given to the trade. A combination of the London booksellers and publishers endeavoured to put a stop to my proceedings, by threatening to make it impossible for me to obtain English books at the trade prices, and thus to destroy my export trade. This attempt to dictate to me the terms on which I should conduct my business, I felt called upon to resist and expose. While doing so I determined to give an account of the numerous obstacles to cheap literature in England, and hence I wrote the article in *The Westminster Review* entitled "The Commerce of Literature," in which I pointed out the evil effects of our publishing and book-selling systems, and revealed the objects and practices of a combination which, during nearly 50 years (with intermittent periods of free trade), has, by "protection," kept the price of English books at a height that has proved a serious obstacle to their extensive diffusion. This article furnished the material out of which arose the discussion in "The Times," and subsequently in other journals; and as a defence of the systems adverted to has been attempted, I shall feel obliged if you will afford me space for the following remarks in reply:—

The "Literary Gazette" of the 3rd instant, says that the allowance to booksellers of  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. discount from the advertised price of books is "exceptional." I beg leave to contradict this assertion, and to state that, as a general rule, booksellers can obtain  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. discount when they choose to purchase 25 copies of a work at a time; and in cases where 13 books are sold as 12—instead of 25 as 24—about 38 per cent. discount is given. If a smaller number of copies be purchased at once—say 3, 4, or 6, according to the rules of different publishers—about 30 per cent. is allowed. Publishers who will sell on these terms at half-yearly sales only, are *exceptional*. 25 per cent. is the usual discount given when a single copy is purchased. Authors whose works are published "on commission" have only to refer to the accounts rendered them by their publishers for a confirmation of my statement. I have shown that both the maximum and minimum discounts above named are greater than needful, and result in making the retail prices of books much higher than they otherwise would be, whereby their sale is diminished, to the disadvantage alike of authors and the public. But the free play of competition was found to inter-



fere with the ease and comfort of old-established houses, and hence the organization pledged to maintain the profits of "the good old times." No combination of literary "protectionists" would have been necessary if men had not been willing and anxious to become the agents for the distribution of books for a remuneration much less than these discounts afford.

In defence of the system, Mr. Murray (in his letter to *The Times*) says:—"The allowance of 25 per cent. has been granted by the established custom of, at least, 100 years." This very fact, it seems to me, supplies a convincing argument that the discount is now too great. It would be strange, indeed, if the marvellous progress which has been made in the world at large did not overtake the bookselling world also, and make changes imperative which 100 years ago were not even dreamt of. Our railway and post-office systems making communication and carriage far cheaper and more rapid, and our improved modes of transacting business making it possible to effect much more with the same amount of labour than was formerly the case, have resulted in a proportionate diminution of the rates of profit; and hence the statement is incredible, that it is still needful to allow to the agents for the distribution of books the same large discounts which were necessary under conditions so widely different from those which now exist.

So far from being "no valid argument," I contend that it is an unanswerable argument, that retail booksellers (freed from the oppressive restrictions of the combination of publishers and wholesale booksellers) "are willing to sell books at 15 or even 10 per cent. profit;" and it seems to me that Mr. Murray's position is not strengthened by bestowing upon those who are not members of the combination, the epithets of "interested and ill-informed persons," and "solitary upstarts," who "endeavour to filch away the customers from old-established houses." If these terms apply to such booksellers as have resolved to supply the public with books as cheaply as they can, then every merchant who supplies his merchandise cheaper than it had before been obtainable, and every public company that sends in the lowest tender to carry her Majesty's mails, to supply her army and navy with stores, or to perform any public service, is deserving of the same opprobrious designations.

Mr. Murray asks, "Why free-trade competition is to be confined to the retail booksellers?"—since "the author and the publisher are unassailable," being enabled "to fix unalterably their own price." But this right, to fix their own price unalterably, is not peculiar to the publishers; the proprietors of all articles of which they are the sole manufacturers enjoy the same right; it is not against this right, as exercised by the publishers, that the anti-protectionists demur, but against the attempt to impose conditions of sale on the booksellers after they have actually purchased the publishers' productions, and have therefore obtained, according to all the usages of trade, and the common sense of commercial men, an undeniable right to dispose of them as they please.

Messrs. Longman and Co. and Mr. Murray inform us that one laudable object of the combination is to "maintain the solvency of the

trade." I, for one, should feel extremely obliged for such considerate protection, could I but discern the dangers from which I am shielded ; but it seems to me that the system adopted has rather a petrifying effect. It "puzzles the brain" to find out how, by fettering the enterprise of men, they are enabled more effectually to pay their debts. But perhaps by "the trade" is meant a few highly-favoured houses within the shadow of St. Paul's. The protective policy undoubtedly *does* concentrate the great mass of the London bookselling "trade" into the hands of certain gentlemen in that vicinity, and if they constitute "the trade," I am at no loss to divine how efficiently its solvency is maintained by the combination in question. It would appear, then, that the members of the combination do not object to a *protected* monopoly in Paternoster Row, but only—in the words of Mr. Murray—to the "monster monopolists" who might arise in various parts of London, under the influence of *free trade* ! But I believe that the anticipated effect of free trade in diminishing the number of booksellers is greatly exaggerated ; and even were it not so, I fail to perceive the logic of Mr. J. H. Parker's conclusion, that "in proportion as the number of booksellers' shops is diminished, the number of copies sold of any book will fall off." It is well known that, where profits are small, activity is increased, in order to realize an adequate income by extending the transactions, and I am convinced that from this cause only the number of copies sold of any book would be much greater than by the present system.

It has been alleged, that the results of free trade would be especially disastrous to new authors, as the large profits now allowed are an essential inducement to retail booksellers to speculate in those new publications which have neither the advantage of an attractive subject, nor the recommendation of being written by authors already in repute. The merest tyro in the trade could expose the fallacy of this argument. He knows by inspection of the blank or meagre subscription lists of such books on the day of publication, that booksellers are not tempted to buy by the large discounts now offered, and that even the shield of protection does not encourage them. But though the "Combination" is powerless to help the firstlings of literature, free trade would effectually befriend them. Now, booksellers are forbidden to offer books, unsalable at their published prices, for what they will fetch, and hence, finding that by purchasing the works of unknown authors their capital may be hopelessly sunk, they prudently decline to incur such risks. But suppose that a retail bookseller, who could conduct his business as he pleased, were to purchase two copies of a work published at 1*l.*, that one of them were sold for 17*s.*, but that no demand were made for the other at that price, he would offer it for the sum he gave for it, 15*s.* or 14*s.* 2*d.*, and if he could not realize this amount, but found that in order to effect a sale he must lower the price to 10*s.*, or even to 5*s.*, he would do so. In all such cases the public would gain by obtaining books at their market value ; shelves would no longer be encumbered with useless stock ; less capital would lie idle ; the bookseller would lessen his loss, which otherwise would be total ; and knowing that he could often avoid risk, and always diminish it, when bad speculations are entered into, by selling on the best terms



possible, he would be emboldened to order far more extensively even the works of new authors, than he dare venture to do now.

After long and vigorous efforts to perpetuate protection, publishers are staggered by the fact, that literary men are constituting themselves judges of this simple problem in political economy. They will form a court from which there can be no appeal, and hence, in order to get a verdict in their favour, certain publishers have themselves made "representations of facts" to "Lord Campbell and several other literary men, and wait to be informed of their conclusions." If "the learned Lord and other eminent authors," in sufficient number to be considered as representing the majority of their intelligent body, should decide in favour of the Association, as Mr. Murray confidently anticipates they will, their joint opinion would have sufficient weight to make the strongest opponent of the booksellers' and publishers' combination pause; but I am convinced, that though the Ghost of Protection may still haunt Albemarle Street and Paternoster Row, it will not overcome the strong sense of England's ablest thinkers. Mr. Murray's own statement that, "already more than one of those gentlemen have *consented* to be *passive*," bears evidence upon its face that they are inclined to take the other side. I may add that, in three notable instances, personal considerations and regard have exerted a restraining influence far more powerful than the "representations" to which Mr. Murray alludes. When authors find that the present book-selling system deprives them of a choice, which they would otherwise possess, of either retaining for themselves a larger proportion than they have hitherto done of the total amount realized from the sale of their works, or of giving a corresponding advantage to the public by selling them at a reduced price, thus increasing their circulation, it is not probable that they will declare themselves as supporters of a system so obviously inimical to their interests.

But the real cause of dispute among the booksellers and publishers is not that the discounts now allowed are too great, but that the right of the booksellers to sell their own property on such terms as they respectively may deem most advantageous to themselves is not acknowledged. This is the beginning and the end of the difficulty. Were this indisputable right fully accorded, publishers might be safely left to themselves to determine what amount of discount would promote most effectually the sale of their publications.

In conclusion, I cannot help remarking that, throughout the letters of those gentlemen who have attempted to defend the present system, the claim of the public to obtain books, as well as other commodities, at the cheapest possible rates, is altogether ignored; but if this claim be valid, and the public recognise its validity, the result will be a general expression of that opinion, in face of which Lord Derby dare not reimpose a tax on bread, and which will destroy a combination intent on maintaining the needlessly high price of books.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

142, STRAND.

JOHN CHAPMAN.

April 8, 1852.







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